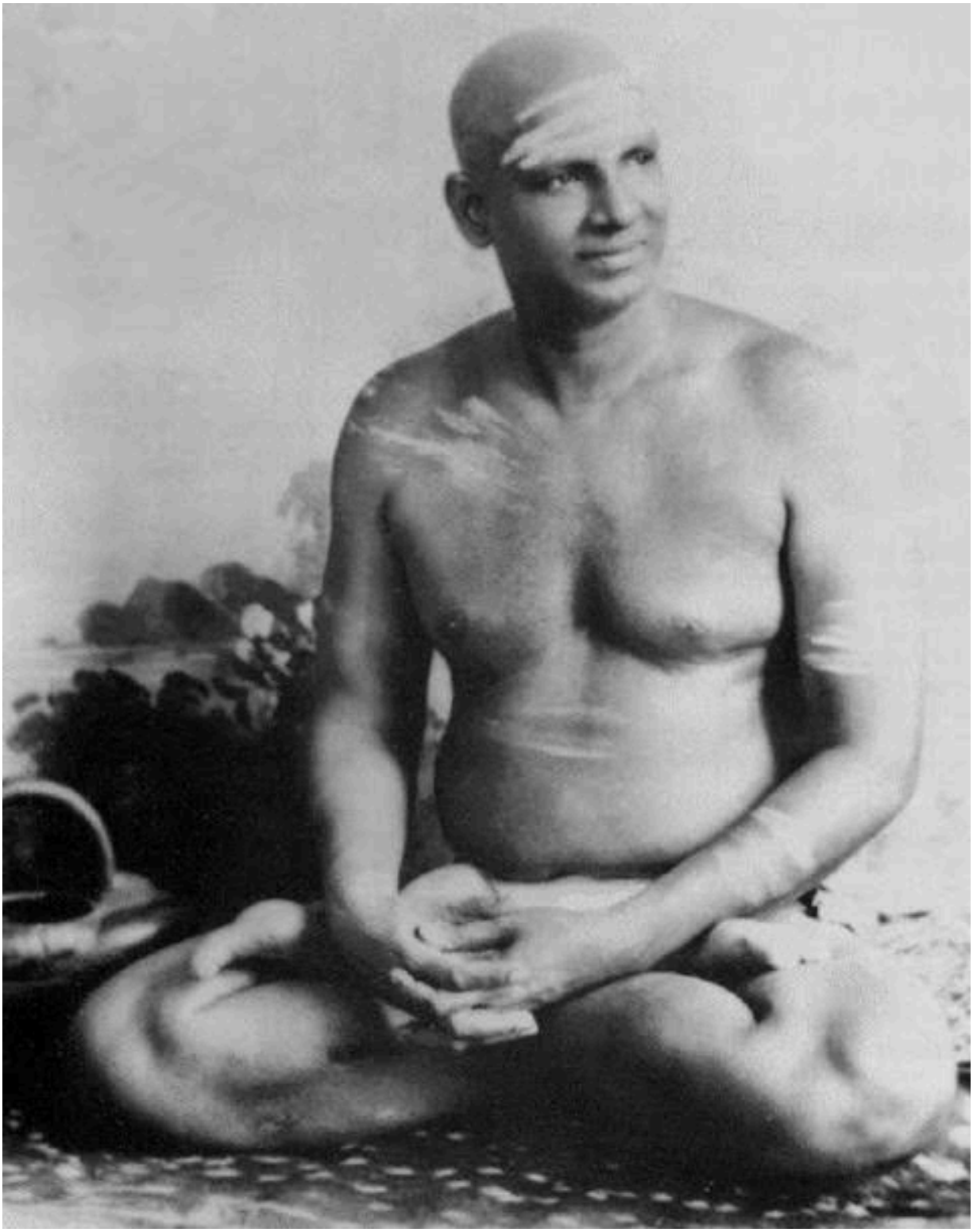

EVERY MAN'S YOGA

Swami Sivananda

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Born on the 8th September, 1887, in the illustrious family of Sage Appayya Dikshitar and several other renowned saints and savants, Sri Swami Sivananda had a natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of Vedanta. Added to this was an inborn eagerness to serve all and an innate feeling of unity with all mankind.

His passion for service drew him to the medical career; and soon he gravitated to where he thought that his service was most needed. Malaya claimed him. He had earlier been editing a health journal and wrote extensively on health problems. He discovered that people needed right knowledge most of all; dissemination of that knowledge he espoused as his own mission.

It was divine dispensation and the blessing of God upon mankind that the doctor of body and mind renounced his career and took to a life of renunciation to qualify for ministering to the soul of man. He settled down at Rishikesh in 1924, practised intense austerities and shone as a great Yogi, saint, sage and Jivanmukta.

In 1932 Swami Sivananda started the Sivanandashram. In 1936 was born The Divine Life Society. In 1948 the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy was organised. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of people in Yoga and Vedanta were their aim and object. In 1950 Swamiji undertook a lightning tour of India and Ceylon. In 1953 Swamiji convened a 'World Parliament of Religions'. Swamiji is the author of over 300 volumes and has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, religions and creeds. To read Swamiji's works is to drink at the Fountain of Wisdom Supreme. On 14th July, 1963 Swamiji entered Mahasamadhi.

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Sri SwamiSivananda

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Om Sri Sat Guru Paramatmane Namah

Om

Dedicated To

All Spiritual Seekers

All Over The World

All May Have

A Right Understanding

Of Yoga

And Follow Their

Respective Paths

In The Spirit Of

Yogic Wisdom

While Practising

The Tenets

According To

The Suitability

Of Their

Temperaments

And

Also Endeavouring

For An Integrated

Development

Of Their

Personalities

And The Ultimate

Attainment Of

Self-realisation

Om

FOREWORD

Perhaps no other science is more misunderstood than the simple spiritual science of Yoga. In India, Yoga is understood to be something that is out of the way. A Yogi is thought to be a queer being, living on herbs and roots in some remote forest or in a dark cave in the fastness of some distant mountain range.

In the West, Yoga is quite often associated with some magical performances such as the rope trick, or some physical acrobatics, standing on the head for example, or some feats of endurance like prolonged retention of breath, doing the so-called Jiva Samadhi or remaining buried underground for several days, which is done by proficiency in Kevala Kumbhaka. It is also supposed that by doing some particular Yoga practices one could fly in the air without wings, or do anything that is odd.

PLACE OF ASANA

Asana and Pranayama alone do not constitute Yoga, though they are a part-and a minor part-of the science of Yoga. Even in Raja Yoga what is meant by Asana, or the third step, is the achievement of proficiency in any of the principal postures for meditation, i.e., remaining steady and at ease for a long time in one particular Asana while one practices withdrawal of the mind from the external objects for concentrating it on something to meditate upon.

Asana as a science of physical culture comes under Hatha Yoga, and though the regular practice of the various cultural poses are useful for maintaining good health and youthfulness, the Asanas do not by themselves necessarily ensure the spiritual development of the practitioner.

PRANAYAMA

Pranayama, likewise, has a significant bearing on the mind, and by regulation or control of breath, one could achieve a measure of mental steadiness and quiescence, good health, and possibly longevity, too, but Pranayama is only an aid for meditation and spiritual unfoldment, and should not be made into a fetish, or taken as a means for gaining control over the physical laws, the law of gravitation for example, the factual validity of which remains to be demonstrated.

Once an adept in Yoga, so the story goes, approached a saint and said that after several years of rigorous practice of a certain kind of Pranayama he (the Yogi) was now able to master the gravitational pull at his will and could at last cross the river near his village, sailing over it as it were, without the risk of getting drowned in the process or even wetting his feet. The saint replied that the Yogi had, alas wasted his precious time all these years, when one could indeed easily cross the river any day by paying two cents to the boatman, and, instead, the Yogi could have attempted for achieving mastery over his mind and aspired for God-realisation.

INNER PROCESS

The idea is that standing on the head by itself does not make one a Yogi. Yoga is essentially an inner process. It is not a religion. It does not pertain to the physical aspect of renunciation or running away from the world. It is primarily a way of life.

Yoga is defined in various ways. The Gita says, proficiency in action is Yoga. One could be a Yogi while yet leading an active life in the world-though enormously difficult it is to constantly maintain the spirit of Yoga surrounded by worldly influences and impelled by negative Samskaras or cumulative impressions acquired in the past.

One has to cultivate a right sense of evaluation, a rational and correct perspective, an insight into the nature of things. The world of senses, which we feel and see, enjoy and suffer from, is not everything. There is something beyond all that is apparent. Life is not entirely matter-bound. There is something higher than the call of mundane duties, something greater than temporal values.

YOGIC PERSPECTIVES

We have to rise above the pairs of the opposites and acquire control over their impacts on our minds, such as through inordinate likes and dislikes, undue elation over material gains whichcannot last long, or a negative state of depression due to a personal loss or suffering that is an outcome of the association of our body and mind, our individuality, with the temporary state of existence.

Thus Vedanta says that one is not the 'doer' or the 'enjoyer' but a silent witness, the Atman or the immortal spirit within. It is the body and the mind that act and enjoy and suffer. The process of Yoga enables our conscience to guide our conduct and action, helps us to do our best and then leave the results in the hands of the Supreme.

One suffers on account of a negative strain of sensual attachment to objects or individuals, an attachment pertaining to one's individuality. One would, therefore, be in a much better position to perform one's duties well if one trained oneself to be a useful instrument for the working of the will of God, i.e., performing action without any selfish motivation or expectation or material gain as an exclusive objective of one's action.

Of course, this requires a good deal of evolution in spiritual life. Detachment, non-expectation, efficiency, initiative, perseverance, application and offering of the results to God-these should be the guiding factors of one's active life. Only then could action be called Yoga.

INTEGRATION AS YOGA

In the path of devotion, emotional integration is called Yoga. A sense of oneness with God is Yoga. Shedding tears for the vision of God is not Yoga, or seeing the appearance of an image associated with any divine incarnation cannot also be called God-realisation. God is not confined to an image. He is in every image and yet beyond all. A particular deity is not the only God, a particular concept of the Father in Heaven is not the only aspect of the ultimate reality.

God-realisation is something infinitely greater than merely seeing some visions during meditation or seeing a divine form in dream, which is but a result of concentration-the appearance of an

impression from the subconscious on the screen of the conscious mind, or in the dream state, caused by prolonged thinking on a particular form. Mere physical concentration of the eyes would enable one to see lights or sparks on the retina.It is not indicative of realisation. Even a worldly man could dream of a particular form drawn by the force of physical attraction. Lights could manifest according to the constituents of one's Tattvas or qualities.

One has to see if the so-called vision of God has indeed completely revolutionised one's inner being and one is thus completely changed from a worldly-minded individual to pure spiritual being. If that is so, then it is a great achievement, indeed. If there is no inner change, then such visions are of no greater importance. We hear so much about the 'performance" of Samadhi or 'seeing' God by devotees. Let us not dupe ourselves. Spiritual realisation is indicated by the quality of life, the purity of character, the cessation of desires, perfect mental equipoise, radiant, infectious happiness, and clarity of vision into the nature of things, in short, a life that is well above the mundane state of existence.

HEART OF A YOGI

Emotional fervour is not Yoga. One who has complete mastery over one's emotions and yet is keenly responsive to the good graces of life and is moved by the sufferings of the world might be said to have the heart of a Yogi. The Yogi's heart is not barren. It is intensely human and humane. It is aware of the faults of the world, but does not mock at them or has any superiority-complex over them.

The heart of a Yogi tries to understand the problems of others and is ever eager to be responsive in helpfulness. It is not a bundle of emotions, fancies and prejudices. It is not impulsive. It is detached, yet full of love. It adores the deity of its choice but has equal respect for all other forms of God, seeing the same deity in them all and also in all the creations of God. It does not confine itself there. It soars beyond them.

The bigoted Bhakta is at best a Purohit or a temple priest or a rosary-telling householder, but not a Yogi or even a man of religion or one of spiritual realisation. In the path of Yoga, bigotry should be totally absent. Yoga begins where mental narrowness disappears.

As already said, Yoga is primarily a concern with one's inner being. Control of the modifications of the mind is Yoga, saysPatanjali. Balance of mind is Yoga. Steadiness in the consciousness of the reality behind appearance is Yoga. A knowledge that is free from oscillation or hypothetical conjecture, a knowledge that is not dependent on the sense-perception, is the outcome of Yoga.

EVERY MAN'S YOGA

'Every Man's Yoga' is ideally suited for the general class of readers who are interested in spiritual topics. It is not textbook for the advanced students of Yoga. For them there are other works of Swami Sivananda and others, which go into details about the respective aspects of Yoga.

This is an ideal work in the sense that it answers to all types of temperaments that are inclined to the spiritual path: It seeks to dispel the pet notions which glamour Yoga as something queer and

sensational. It presents a great science in a very simple, lucid manner, while expertly analysing the different aspects through a comprehensive outlook.

SUBJECTS OF CHAPTERS

In the first chapter the reader is reminded of the spiritual purpose of life and what should be nature of one's aspiration through which one could find real happiness. The second chapter is an elaboration of the first, giving the essential points concerning the Yoga way of life.

Chapters three to six deal on the four major aspects-Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. These do not necessarily give all the points concerning them, but help to acquaint the readers with a fairly adequate knowledge of the essential features of the four main paths. After a study of these four chapters, one could go in for detailed reading of the individual works of Swami Sivanandaji and others concerning each of the principal Yogas.

The seventh chapter details the techniques and the benefits of most of the major Asanas and Pranayamas. The eighth chapter is on the various aspects of self-culture, with ethics as the base. The ninth chapter pertains to mental culture, analyses the characteristics of the mind and points to the ways for conquering the mind.

The tenth chapter gives some general sidelights on Yoga, also touching on the law of Karma and the ways of gaining individual and collective peace. The eleventh chapter presents the Yogic view of religion, which is rather a concept of universal religion based on practical spiritual life. It also indicates the importance of the Yoga of synthesis or an integral development of the personality of man.

The last chapter gives a sweeping analysis of what has already been dealt with in this work, but in a new light and in a convincing manner, delineating the essential tenets of the Yoga way of life-a life that is not divorced from normal avocations, but is harmoniously attuned to the call of the infinite spirit, a life that is ultimately meant for Self-realisation.

We trust this work will be found useful to all students ofYoga.

Guru Purnima,
July 27, 1961

-THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

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EVERY MAN’S YOGA

Chapter One

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

HAIL FATHER!

Hail Father! Hail O Lord of the universe!
Thy limit is unknown;
Thou art the Supreme Eternal;
Thou art the Source of all beings;
First among the gods, Preserver of all;
Descend unto me in all Thy divine glory,
Fill my mind with Thy Light,
Make my will an instrument of Thy work,
Fill my heart with Thy joy;
Speak through my mouth, O Lord,
Work through my hands, O Father,
So that I may say or do no wrong;
Give me the Supreme Peace
That passeth all understanding;
May all realise Thy real nature,
Thou who art one among many;
Let not people fight in Thy Holy Name
To justify their individual sectarian egos;
Let no one besmirch Thy sacredness
With foolish bigotry and narrow-heartedness,
Thou who art infinite and all-pervading:
Lead us all from the unreal to the Real,
From darkness to Light Divine,
From mortality to Immortality!
Hail, Father! Hail, O Primal Being!

Life's Glorious Objective

O My Beloved Friends!

Have you ever understood the significance and the glory of human life? Have you ever realised what a precious gift and veritable divine inheritance this human birth is? Do you not fee that life is meant for the fulfilment of a most sublime purpose? Truly, it is meant for the attainment of a lofty goal,-divine perfection and perennial peace and happiness.

You all know quite well that life is not merely the process of breathing, eating, digesting, thinking, feeling, knowing, willing, and so on. Life is not entirely meant for all these, only to die atthe end, without achieving anything really worthwhile.

You truly live your life well, when you strive manfully for attaining balance of mind and the highest spiritual realisation as well serving a great cause, for the welfare of humanity. Toast. butter and jam, fashionable clothing, a bungalow and a motor car, attending cocktail parties-all these do not really constitute life. These are not the end-all of the life of man who was supposed to have been made "in the image of God."

Mere sensual life is, after all, only the life of an animal. Every day you must try to transcend this level and make it as pure as possible by being divine. Egoism, worldly desire and sensuality-all these constitute ignorance; they spring from deep delusion. Can material comforts alone give you real happiness? Can creature comforts alone elevate the soul of man? Can gross physical welfare alone confer upon you solace, courage, peace, joy, and eternal perfection in the Spirit?

Know Your Ideal

O Blessed Children of Immortality! Reflect yourself over what I say. Think deeply. Discriminate between the Real and the unreal. You will realise the truth about the purpose of life. In the dizzy whirlpool of fleeting sensual pleasures and ceaselessly seething desires, do not forget the true purpose of life and its real goal.

There is no greater blunder than to mistake the unreal for the Real, the transitory for the permanent, and to forget the most important duty in life-Self-realisation. What greater folly, what greater tragedy is there than when a man is satisfied by just being on the animal plane, just functioning on the instinctive, emotionally unsettled and pseudo-intellectual level?

You were helpless when you were a baby, you are helpless when disease overtakes you and when you are seriously ill; you are helpless when powerful calamities like flood, earthquake, cyclone, strike you down; you are helpless and miserable when you become old and senile. Why then are you so proud and egotistic?

Rise above your delusions and attain the highest good through discrimination and dispassion, self-analysis and enquiry into your real, spiritual nature. Enquire "Who am I?" and try to realise the true nature of the Self. Then you will transcend your body and mind and attain Godhead. Then alone will you be really free and happy.

Virtue Victorious

Virtue is the way to peace and enlightenment. Righteousness is the secret of Self-realisation. Purity is the pathway to perfection. Goodness leads you to godliness. Strive for moral excellence. Live a strictly ethical life. Adhere to truth and equity, and swerve not from the basic principles of a good life. Build your life upon absolute righteousness. Cultivate the noble qualities of the heart with diligence and care. Be sincere, friend! Without sincerity everything is tinsel. Actively practise all virtues in right earnest.

The spiritual aspirant must be an embodiment of goodness. Think no evil. Speak no evil. Do no evil. Be good in thought, word and deed.

Remember the Lord as often as you can. He is your inner Ruler. Pray to Him fervently, with humility and devotion, for purifying your nature and helping you to realise Him. Live for God. Live to do your duty. Boldly face all the passing problems of this petty, earthly life.

Be a hero

Be a hero. With courage, conviction and commonsense, live your life truthfully. Shooting a tiger from the back of an elephant or bombing a city are not the acts of real heroism and courage. Controlling your mind and senses, and overcoming anger, passion and egoism by attaining self-mastery, constitute real heroism in men. How long will you be a slave of passion and the senses?

Assert your real, divine nature to yourself and your mastery over your lower self. This is your important duty.

Do not identify yourself with this perishable body. Do not run after fashion and glamour. Do not cultivate the habit of clinging to the glittering names and forms. Do not be ignorant friend, and think not much of your intelligence. Be not obsessed with the feeling: "I am an Englishman, I am an American, I am an Indian; I am black, I

am white, I am mongoloid; I am superior; I am inferior; I know everything, he knows nothing: I have done this, I have done that; I am a Hindu, I am a Christian, 1 am a Mohammedan, I am a Parsi, I am a Jain."

Thy Real Nature

All such obsessions are the worst type of ignorance. Hear the great truths proclaimed by the prophets, Godmen, saints and sages of real wisdom. Thou art neither this perishable body nor this impure mind. Thou art the Truth Eternal-ever-free ever-perfect and ever-blissful Spirit Immortal. Thou art in essence, Sat-chit-ananda Atman. Thou art imperishable. This is thy real glorious nature. Where then are thy body-mind-bound ego, the little intellect, the little learning, the skin-deep beauty?

Feel this, meditate over this and assert this. Realise this and attain the wisdom of the Self. Then you will not function on the sensual, animal plane. Life is meant for the practice of Yoga. Yoga is life divine. Yoga is right performance of duty. Practise the Yoga of saintliness. Do selfless service in a spirit of humble worship of the Virat. Cultivate devotion to God. Purify the heart through charity and generosity. Meditate daily on the Lord.

Essence of Divine Life

Through ceaseless discrimination, reflection and inquiry, attain the wisdom of the Self. Serve. Love. Give. Purify. Meditate. Realise. Be good. Do good. Be kind. Be compassionate. Enquire "Who am I?", know the Self, and be free.

The one Lord dwells in all beings. Feel His presence everywhere. See Him alone in all beings and things. Give up all distinctions and differences, born of prejudice. Feel that you are one with all. Love all. Cooperate with all in a spirit of brotherhood, and kindle the light of compassion in your heart. Be not exclusive and selfish. Radiate pure love through your life. Start the good life right from today, right from now. Cast aside alldoubts, fears and misgivings. Do not hesitate. Be bold. Life is short. Time is fleeting. You have got to be practical. My friend, do not be weak in thy faith. You must have absolute trust in God. Never forget your true purpose in life. Never forget your immortal nature. Wake up from your long sleep of ignorance. Realise your hidden, real nature. Stop not till the goal is reached. Stop not till you attain the wisdom of the Self, and till it becomes practically expressive in every moment of your life.

Attain Perfection

O Wanderer in this desert of Samsara! Overcome all evil qualities; annihilate lust, greed and egotism, and return back to your sweet, original home, the abode of eternal peace and bliss. Through diligent struggle with the lower nature, the lower self, and through a life of practical goodness which Yoga, attain spiritual perfection in this very life. To whatever nation, to whatever race, to whatever class of society you belong, your great duty and the most important work is this-the attainment of the highest spiritual perfection.

Your birthright is Sat-chit-ananda. Everybody unconsciously longs to be immortal, because no one wishes to die. That shows, you want to be eternally existent, which is possible only through knowledge eternal. No one wishes to be rated as a fool, and the longing for knowledge is dormant in all. From mundane knowledge when one progresses to spiritual intuition, then one becomes supremely happy, which is a state of bliss which no earthly object can give. No one wishes to be unhappy, and the longing for happiness is common in all. These are anindication to the background of man's real nature, an eternal state of existence-knowledge-bliss. Thou art That O man!

May the Lord, the one God, who is known variously, bestow upon you all the highest bliss and the profoundest peace in this very life. May love alone prevail everywhere. May peace and prosperity be unto all beings.

YOUR BIRTHRIGHT

Friends!

You have a birthright, everyonehas.Itis goodness, purity, wisdom and a practical life in tune with the Spirit. How to achieve it? Cultivategoodness.Radiate goodness, silently, modestly. Become an embodiment of goodness, purity, morality, unity,brotherhoodand selfless service. You are essentially divine. You are not just a rational animal. Reflect, meditateandrealiseyour essential, spiritual nature. This must be realised through all your normal activities-in thought, wordanddeed.

There is so much talk ofuniversalbrotherhood, unity, love, cooperation, mutual understanding, cultural revival and so forth, but so littleofpracticalliving of these ideals is to be found. Unless your idealism is vitally and dynamically lived, it is worthless.Beinganddoing are the need of the hour, for India and the world at large.

Do not care whichwaythismangoesor that man acts. But do your part to fullness, sincerely, tenaciously. Be good and do good. Adapt,adjust,accommodate. Let every man live these ideals. A better society, a better India, a better world will emergeoutofthis.Letspirituality be not a Sunday Service affair. It should be accepted as a great universal law. Beforepositivegoodness,negative evil cannot stand. It is practical, positive goodness that can surely overcome all vices andallevilsthatonecomplains about in this world. God has given you commonsense. You must act wisely. You willfindthatdarknessgives place to light.

May God bless you with successinallyourspiritual endeavours.

IN QUEST OF HAPPINESS

The whole universe, from the mightiest star to the tiniest atom, is governed by the Cosmic Law The sun rises and sets at proper intervals, the earth's rotation and revolution around the sun being infallible. The planets revolve around their stars according to a basic law. There is a cosmic Power behind all the functioning in the universe. On earth also there is the law of Karma, the law of health and hygiene. Man alone violates all rules and laws. He leads his life according to his whims, and then suffers from disease and disharmony. He deliberately ignores the laws of physical and mental health and weeps later because of some incurable disease or failing health.

Everyone in this world is restless, discontented, frustrated. Man always feels that he is in want of something, the nature of which he himself does not clearly understand. He gets coveted degrees, diplomas, power, position, name and fame. He marries a beautiful girl and has lovely babies. Even then he is restless and worried. Why? Man wants real happiness: infinite, eternal, immortal happiness, which he cannot find in material objects. He seeks it in diverse names and forms. He thinks that happiness is in wife and children, in prosperity and worldly enjoyment. But, alas, such is not the case. None of the objects can give him that happiness which he seeks, but which he can find only in the Spirit, his original source. The householder thinks that the bachelor is happy, and vice versa, and both of them think that the renunciate is happy, and the pseudo-renunciate, who ran away from the world because of circumstantial factors, thinks that if he had enough money, he could live the true life of a Sadhu, without having to depend on anybody. Transient things can give you only transitory happiness. A real, everlasting thing alone can give you everlasting happiness.

Happiness Is Within

What is that real thing? Control your senses. Still the mind. Purify and stabilise the emotions. Concentrate and meditate. Turn the gaze inwards. Behold the source of infinite bliss-your own inner Self.

Cultivate a generous heart, a giving hand, a kindly speech, a life of service, equal vision and balance of mind Think what is good, speak what is good and do what is Be mild and meek but firm in your ideal, be gentle but bold, be reserved but straightforward, be humble but courageous, be simple but dignified. Doing good to others, restraining the senses and purifying the lower nature constitute the most practical religion. Do any kind of selfless service for a few hours every week, without egotism, ostentation or expectation of reward. Do your temporal duties without attachment or impure motive. Work is worship; dedicate it to God. Control fits of anger and jealousy by practising serenity, patience, love, mercy and tolerance. Forget and forgive. Adapt and adjust. Accommodate yourself to circumstances and individuals to deal with. But de not lose your bearing. Curtail your wants. Reduce your possessions. Get rid of attachment, little by little. Be self-supporting Avoid dependence on others as far as possible. Cultivate the habit of simple living, unobtrusiveness, and contemplation on Truth.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE ASPIRANT

Man is a mixture of three qualities human brutal and divine He is endowed with a limited intellect perishable body, a discerning power and a potential capacity for originality. This makes him distinctly human. Lust, anger, hatred belong to his brutal nature, and compassion, fellowship and love to his human make-up. A reflection of the cosmic intelligence is at the back of his intellect. So he is capable of *knowing*. When the brutal instincts die, when ignorance is rent asunder, when he is able to bear pleasure and pain with equanimity, when he has got full control over his physical reactions and feelings, he is ready to be one with the Divine.

Regular Japa, meditation, Kirtan, prayer, enquiry of 'Who am I, solitude, Satsanga, selfless service, practice of Asana and Pranayama, observance of physical and mental disciplines all these Yogic practices will pave a long way in developing your will-power and destroying the brutal instincts. You will have to cultivate great patience and endurance. You will have to kill your egoism, pride, body-mind-bound vanity, and the false identification with the perishable objects. Then alone you can progress on the spiritual path. Do not speak harsh, vulgar words. Do not think of revenge. Kill the vindictive attitude. Check impulsive speech, thought and action. You will gradually gain control over physical reactions and feelings.

The world cannot stand in your way of God-realisation. You can realise in and through the world, provided your idealism is strong and as long as you are not the slave of the senses. The world is your best teacher, if only you would wish to learn. Exhibit manly fortitude. Do not be timid. The coward has no place on the path of Truth. No one can escape trials. The aspirants will be tested by the Lord and a time will come for everybody to bear difficulties, adversities and frustrations. These trials should make you wonderfully strong, rather than be a burden to bend you down. You must have a burning aspiration to lead the divine life. Do not give leniency to your mind. Do not flout public opinion. Do not deceive yourself.

Though you may not feel much benefit or satisfaction in the beginning, the latent effects of Sadhana will bestow accumulated strength and happiness later on. No effort goes in vain. Obstacles and unfavourable circumstances are God-sent chances to make you more steady and strong. But do not be foolish enough to create them yourself. You will find that much of your trouble is self-wrought. Remedy the cause. Be bold and valiant. Be practical always. Nothing can affect you. Sadhana must go on in great strides. May you all shine as brilliant Yogis in spiritual glory!

WHAT MAN REALLY IS

Peaceful, auspicious and beautiful, radiant, ever-pure and immortal, is the nature of the inner Consciousness, the Atman. that pervades all creation. It is on account of the wrong superimposition of multiple, unreal traits upon himself that man becomes ensnared, miserable and imperfect. A little reflection, introspection and enquiry will reveal that in the heart of every human being there is an impulse for self-awareness, an urge to know, to be happy and to be deathless. This reveals that man's real nature is Satchidananda, or existence-knowledge-bliss absolute. This is your birthright. If you deny yourself this, then you abrogate the very purpose of life.

All aspects of the individual consciousness such as that of the libido, race, parentage, intelligence and power are not representative of what one really is. These aspects depend upon the factors that are not permanent. They change when things change. They also change when the individual alters his thoughts, mode of living, or his philosophy of life. One can easily see how the other layers of inhibitions, habits and aptitudes are shed and acquired from time to time in accordance with the changing circumstances and self-effort. But the Soul-Consciousness, however dormant it may be, cannot be shaken off by anyone, since it springs from the depth of one's real nature within.

Unfold Thyself

All knowledge comes from within. The Self within is the storehouse for all knowledge and bliss. The practice of discrimination, dispassion, self-restraint and enquiry produces purity of mind, and the light of the Soul begins to shine. The aspirant is guided by the small inner voice. He must not mistake the voice of the instinctive mind for the voice of the Soul. If the mind is not purified thoroughly, if there are lurking desires, if there are some undercurrents of subtle, secret cravings, the voice of the Soul will not be heard.

To manifest this inner Consciousness is the essence of spiritual life. This is the goal of every human being. The purpose of life is to eliminate all that is negative and evil in man's personality and to develop in himself all that is sublime, good, auspicious and noble. That is done through the means of self-discipline and righteous living.

Moral rectitude and ethical perfection form the universal basis of all spiritual endeavours, "Be good, do good, be kind, be pure, be compassionate, be tolerant, serve, love, give, purify, introspect, reflect, meditate and realise God," constitute the essence of all religious teachings.

Cultivation of positive traits such as purity, truthfulness, nobility, unselfish love, forbearance, humility, absence of anger and greed and lust, spirit of brotherhood, self-sacrifice, integrity, composure of the mind, and restraint of the senses, form the various disciplines in spiritual life. Renunciation of attachment, pride, egoism and all worldly desires are the basic requisites for Self-realisation.

Blessed Self, resolve anew to lead the spiritual life with sincerity and perseverance. You should ever endeavour to correct your defects and mistakes, not under the burden of shame or a guilty complex, but with an earnest desire to evolve yourself ethically, morally and spiritually, so that you need no longer be tormented by mental conflicts, sorrow and suffering, but set upon a new vista of joyous experiences and spiritual fulfilment.

May there be peace, prosperity and well-being all around. May all be happy. May the blessings of God be upon all.

Chapter Two

A PREVIEW OF YOGA LIFE

THE SPIRITUAL MARINER'S COMPASS

God

God is a link between the universe and the individual.

God is the ultimate Reality, the basic entity which sustains life and knowledge.

God, the individual and the world are really not three. They are the three phases of one thing. They are three ways of looking at or understanding the one thing.

The entire world is one family, as it were, because the whole creation is a habitation of God.

Religion

Religion is the relationship between the three fundamental principles: God, world and the individual.

Religion is defined as the expression in life of the relationthat exists between man and God, and man and the world.

Religion is only a name given to the law that governs the whole universe.

Religion is practical philosophy. Philosophy is the understanding of the ultimate Principle that governs life. Religion is the art of practising it, i.e., living the spirit of philosophy.

Unless you know the relation that exists between God, world and the individual, you cannot know religion and cannotpractise religion.

One of the main purposes of religion is the purification of man's lower nature.

Aim of Life

Every act, or every thought, or every impulse is an evidence of the existence of some purpose. There is some aim to be fulfilled. The highest aim is God-realisation.

Unconscious movement is called natural progress or regress. Conscious evolution is Yoga or the practice of religion

Conscious attempt to merge ourselves in the Supreme Reality is called spiritual Sadhana, which should be a common aim of all life, though the processes could be different.

Sadachara

The principle of Sadachara or right conduct, and the leading ofa good life of truth, love and purity, are the first concerns of Yoga.

The primary step in Yoga is to see that one turns awayfrom evil towards good.

The inculcation of the Yogic spirit in daily life is the most rational and effective means of overcoming the evil tendencies in man.

The first lesson you should learn is toleration.

The greatest duty of each individual is to spread the ideal of brotherhood among one another.

Let there be mutuality in a positive spirit of goodwill.

Behave with others as you wish others to behave with you. This is a world of give and receive.

Sadhana

Grow in purity. Grow in virtue. Free yourself from mundane desires. Become lustless, angerless, selfless and egoless.

The aspirant, intent on treading the spiritual path, tries to cut at the very root of the cause, bondage by the means of discrimination, dispassion, prayer, Japa of the Lord's Name, Sankirtan, meditation, and so on.

Daily undertake a pilgrimage to the shrine of peace and holiness within the recesses of your heart. This is the greatest pilgrimage.

Doubt is rooted in ignorance. It is an obstacle in the spiritual path. It should be destroyed by cultivating intense faith inthe Lord and the principles of spiritual life.

The aspirant should shine as a pure jewel by his own light of Sadhana.

Oneness

The sense of unity is not produced by shaking hands, by mixing in a party, or by such other gross physical contacts. The unity of heart and mind is more substantial.

Underneath all apparent divergences there is the golden link of fundamental oneness, which very few realise.

The sense of separateness is the cause of all pain in this world.

Mind

Man's mind always flows outward, and to turn it inward, to stabilise it in the consciousness of God, is the purpose of Sadhana.

Turn the gaze within. Introspect. Analyse. Find out your own faults, and remedy them by practising their opposite virtuous qualities.

It is very easy to find fault with others and condemn others. But that will not enable you to progress. You should findfault with yourself.

Thoughts have power to mould your life. Therefore, cultivate good thoughts.

Balance of mind is an important Yogic discipline.

Peace and Happiness

The most elusive thing in this world is real peace and happiness. The only true happiness is the bliss of the Soul or Atman. Real peace is within.True happiness is above money, material possessions,family, social prestige and glory. You cannot buy happiness. InGod alone is real happiness, in meditation alone real peace.

The surest way to attain peace is to simplify your life and resolve inner complexes. Fewer the wants, greater the peace.

Light from Saints

Study the lives of saints. They will inspire you tremendously. Hold Satsanga in your own house and narrate the lives of saints to your family and children and friends.

Save the money that you waste on luxuries and with that amount print and distribute widely leaflets and pamphlets narrating the lives of saints.

Practising the teachings of and thinking constantly ofsaints, you will become a saint yourself.

Saints try to fulfil the will of God. They alone can understand what is the will of God. Their thoughts pervade the whole earth and fill the hearts of all receptive beings. Divine thoughts generated by saints preserve spiritual sanctity in the world.

Charity is not merely giving a little money to the poor. Truecharity is forgiving one who offends you any number of times.

An aspirant who wants to grow in saintliness should cultivate desirelessness, purity and selflessness. It is the extent to which he grows in these three cardinal virtues that decides the degree of his spiritual progress.

What is it that is outside us? What is there above us? What is it within us? What is this world? What is God? What is Soul? Only a saint knows the reality of the answer.

The great injunction of theancient seers and sages of transcendental experience has always been to uphold the spiritual sanctity and theunity of life. Life is sacred. In sacredness it should be lived.

WHATISRENUNCIATION?

Running away from the world is no renunciation.
Abandoning all actions is no renunciation,
For no onebut aperfected-soul
Can really abandon actions.
Irresponsibility and heedlessness
Have nothing to do with renunciation.
The matted-locks and the ash-covered body
Are not indicative of renunciation.
Theorangerobeand theclean-shaven head
Do not constitute renunciation.
Discussionson theunreality oftheworld
And parrot-like repetition of Vedantic formulae
Cannot make one a renunciate.
Long hairs and unkempt beard,
Tattered clothes and bare feet,
Living on milk and fruit, and chanting "Sivoham,"
Are notsuggestiveofrenunciation.

Renunciation foretells Viveka, right understanding.
Renunciation springs fromtheheart.
Renunciation is stamped on the face of the renunciate.
You cannot hideordisguiserenunciation.

Freedom fromegoism,"I-ness"and"mineness,"

Freedom fromcravingsanddesires,
Freedom fromgluttonyandthehybridformsoflust,
Freedom fromjealousyandattachment,
Freedom fromhatredandsensualobsessions,
Freedom fromthedesireforcomfortandease,
For companyofwomenandfashionableclothing,
Absence ofvainglorioustensionandhypocrisy
All these areindicativeofrealrenunciation.

Balance ofmindisrenunciation.
Abandoning theidea of"doership"and "enjoyership"
Is real renunciation,whichisdifficulttoachieve.
Rising abovebody-consciousnessisrenunciation.
Freedom frompartialattitudeisrenunciation.
Living in theconsciousnessoftheAtman,
Being alwayssteadyinthestateofequilibrium,
Freedom fromthedrossofthelowernature,
Rising abovepossessiveness
And desire fornameandfame-
Are the conditionsofrenunciation.

BENEFITS OF HOLY COMPANY

When people join together and sing the Lord's Name and pray, a great spiritual current is generated. That is the glory of Satsanga. If you shut yourself up in your room and do Japa and meditation, you may not progress so fast, but if you form a small Satsanga group, and all of you do Japa together and meditate together, the spiritual force generated will help you all. You will make rapid and wonderful progress. When you attend a Satsanga, you will forget the worries of the world, for you are in an entirely different atmosphere.

It is Satsanga alone that can transform man in these days. Sublime ideas must be constantly dinned into the ears of man. Then only will his heart be transformed.

Lead a Good Life

Man is generally selfish and has no sense of duty. At the moment of death, your conscience will prick you. You will have no peace of mind at the time of death or ever afterwards. Dishonesty kills your conscience; it is like Atma-Hatya. It is like killing yourself. Be honest. Have a pure heart, a clean mind and a clear conscience. Even if you are poor, you will be happy. If you are honest, the whole wealth of the world will belong to you. A man is not rich because he has a lot of money in the bank. Only that man is really rich whose heart is rich. Each virtue is worth more than a million rupees. Cultivate a charitable heart. Give as much money in charity as you can afford, to the deserving. Then only will the heart expand.

There should be Satsanga everywhere. Through Satsanga people will learn of Dharma. They will be transformed. The entire society will be transformed. Sublime ideas and ideals will enter the hearts of people. Dishonesty will abate. Dharma will reign supreme. People will become "SarvabhutahiteRatah" (devoted to the welfare of all beings), feeling that the entire world is one family.

Practical Vedanta

One life, one consciousness, one Self, dwells in all, just as one sun and one moon shine equally over the world. But the power of Maya shows every thing as different. The scavenger and the cobbler are your own Self. It is Maya that makes you feel: “This man is inferior and that man is superior.” Vedanta speaks of unity. All are one. This truth has to permeate your entire being. That can be done only through Satsanga.

You should constantly hear and dwell upon sublime ideals. Some Vedantic students go about saying “There is no world in the three periods of time.” But, if there is a little less salt in their soup or less sugar in their milk, they would be upset. This lip-Vedanta will not do any good. You have to be practical Vedantins. You can become practical Vedantins only through constant Satsanga.

Real Beauty

You must learn the principles of real life through Satsanga. Real life is living for others. You beautify yourself by wearing diamond rings and Benares silk sarees. Is there beauty in diamond rings and Benares sarees? Siva-Bhava and charity are real diamonds. You dress yourself nicely and see yourself in a mirror a hundred times. Does that give you beauty? Beauty is within. Infinite beauty dwells in the chambers of your heart. *Jyotishamapi tat jyotihtamasah param uchyate; jnanam, jneyam, jnanagamyam, hridisarvasyabishthitam*. You spend all your time in beautifying this body! This is all waste of precious time, precious life. You must learn to utilise your time properly through Satsanga, and good work.

Be kind to all. Help your down-trodden brother. Instead of having a dozen shirts for yourself, give a shirt to the poor man. Thus only can you evolve. Thus only can you realise the Atman, the one Self that dwells in all.

See Good in All

Try to see good in everybody. Do not develop the Dosha-Drishti, fault-finding nature. Your evil mind, your lower nature will try to ignore the good qualities that are in a man and try to see his defects only. You will have to acquire the eye ofdiscrimination. Human nature is such that man tries to see only defects in others. You will even superimpose evils upon persons in whom such evil qualities do not exist. Through Satsanga, study and application you will have to eradicate this nature. You will have to cultivate the habit of seeing only good in others. Then only will you be able to have the sense of oneness with all, and will be able to recognise the goodness in all. You should try to cultivate this habit through Satsanga.

The spiritual benefit which you cannot get in years of study, you can have in a month's Satsanga. You have experienced it now. I am not deceiving you. This is AparokshaAnubhuti. When you sing Kirtan here, you forget the world. What made you forget the world and rise above body-Consciousness? It is Kirtan of the Lord's Name; it is Satsanga.

Only through Satsanga can you be vigilant. You can enter into Bhava Samadhi through Satsanga. You can learn many new things through Satsanga. It is not necessary that you should have the company of realised souls for Satsanga. Gather a few spiritually-inclined friends. Pray together. Meditate together. Sing the Lord's Name together. Study together from religious books.This is Satsanga.

CHANGE THE ANGLE OF VISION

No man is absolutely bad. Everyone has some good traits or other. Try to see the good in everyone. Develop the good-finding nature. This will act as a powerful antidote against fault-finding habit.

Before finding the evils in others, find out whether you have got the same weaknesses or not. If you have got the same weaknesses, try to eradicate them and improve yourself first. If you have not got those weaknesses, sympathise with the other person, and pray to God to bless him with better sense and sufficient strength to get rid of the same.

Even the rogue is a potential saint. Remember this point well. No one is an eternal rogue. Place a bad man in the company of saints. Gradually his nature will be changed. Hate roguery but not a rogue. See the Lord everywhere. Feel His presence. God is all and all is God.

For an impersonal scientist, a woman is a mass of electrons. For a Vaiseshika philosopher, she is a conglomeration of atoms. For a tiger, she is an object of prey. For a passionate husband, she is an object of enjoyment. For a crying child she is an affectionate mother. For a Viveki, she is only a human being. For a Jnani, she is Sat-Chit-Ananda Atman. For a Bhakta she is a Devi.

Change the angle of vision. Then only will you find heaven on earth. What is the earthly use of your reading the Upanishads and the Vedanta Sutras, when you have an evil eye and a foul tongue, my dear aspirants?

The first two methods are forthe beginners. The last three methods are for the advanced students of Yoga. Anyone can combine these fivemethods to one’s best advantage.

SOME COMMON AIDS TO YOGA

Diet

Purity of food brings purity of mind. Mind is the subtlest essence of food. Food has a very close connection with the practice of Brahmacharya (celibacy).

An aspirant should be careful in the selection of diet in the beginning of his spiritual life. Later on, drastic dietetic restrictions can be removed. Take wholesome, Sattvic (pure) food, half a stomachful.

The food must be simple, bland, spiceless, non-irritating and non-stimulating. Stuffing up the stomach is highly deleterious. You should take food only when you are hungry.

Highly seasoned dishes, hot curries and spices, meat, fish, tamarind, mustard, onion, garlic, asafoetida, pickles, things fried in oil, pastry preparations, eggs, tobacco, alcohol, tea, coffee and narcotic drugs-all these are not advisable for the whole-time spiritual aspirants.

Health

Pure water, pure air, wholesome food, brisk walking or outdoor games, simple Asanas and Pranayamas-all contribute to the maintenance of health, strength and a good standard of vigour and vitality.

Without good health you cannot penetrate into the hidden depths of the vast ocean of life within and attain the goal you set before you. Without good health you cannot wage war with the turbulent senses and the impish mind.

Brahmacharya

Brahmacharya is abstinence from sexual thoughts or acts. It is control of all the organs in thought, word and deed.

Through Brahmacharya you can get over the miseries of mundane life and attain health, strength, peace of mind, endurance, psychic advancement, clear brain, will-power, bold understanding, retentive memory, and the power to face the difficulties in the daily battle of life.

Occasional fasts check emotions, calm the passions and help in the practice of Brahmacharya. Have cold hip-bath. Get up at 4 a.m., and practise meditation. Keep the mind fully occupied. Have good company. Avoid the agents of excitement.

The practice of celibacy is not attended with any danger or any disease or any undesirable results such as the various sorts of complexes which are wrongly attributed by some psychologists. The complexes are a morbid state of mind due to excessive jealousy, hatred, anger, worry and childhood emotional stresses.

Repression, of course, is harmful, and can create complexes. What is indicated in spiritual life is sublimation of the sex-urge through positive methods.

Other Aids

Performance of virtuous actions is the beginning of spiritual life. Go to bed at 10 p.m., and get up at 4 a.m. Early morning is favourable for meditation. The meditative state of the mind will come by itself without much exertion at this period. The mind can be moulded easily. Meditation at this period for half an hour is equal to meditation for three hours during the day.

Observe the vow of silence for two hours daily. Energy is wasted in idle talking and gossiping. Avoid long talk, big talk, tall talk, all sorts of acrimonious debates and discussions.

Selfless service removes the impurities of the mind. Serve without egoism and expectation. Avoid evil company and resort to the company of pure souls.

Keep a daily spiritual diary and observe a daily routine of Sadhana. Everybody can at least do half an hour of prayer in the morning and at night, and 15 minutes of Yoga exercises after morning prayer.

BASIC SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS

'Sama' and 'Dama'

Sama indirectly means the practice of the eradication of desires. It is serenity or tranquillity of mind that is brought about by the annihilation of desires. According to Tattva Bodha, Sama is the control of the 'inner' organs, i.e., the organs of knowledge or the five Jnana Indriyas, viz., ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose, and Dama is the control of the 'external' organs, i.e., the organs of action or the five Karma Indriyas, viz., speech, hands, feet, and the reproductive and the excretory organs. According to 'Aparoksha Anubhuti' of Sri Sankara:

Sadaivavasanatyagasamoayamitisabditah,
Nigrahobahyavrittinamdamaityabhidheeyate.

"The constant eradication of the Vasanas or subtle desires is called the control of the mind or Sama. The restraint of the external activities is called the control of the body or Dama."

According to *Vivekachudamani*, the resting of the mind steadily on its goal, i.e., Brahman (Svalakshya), after having detached itself from the manifold sense-objects, by continually taking cognizance of their drawbacks, is called Sama or calmness. Turning both kinds of sense-organs (viz., five Jnana Indriyas and five Karma Indriyas) away from the sense-objects and fixing them in their respective centres, is called Dama or self-control.

If you do not try to fulfil your desires for objects and if you reject them through discrimination, right enquiry and dispassion, this practice of relinquishing the desire is called Sama. By gradual and protracted practice you will get peace of mind. Thus the mind is checked directly from wandering through the practice of Sama and Dama. Its outgoing tendencies are curbed. Sankalpas of objects are eradicated.

The eyes run outside to see a beautiful woman with lustful thoughts. If you at once withdraw the eye from that object, this practice is called Dama. You should restrain the mind also through the process of withdrawal and substitution by holy thoughts.

If you want to practise Sama, you should cultivate Viveka or discrimination between the Real and the unreal, and Vairagya or dispassion for the enjoyment of objects. Then only will you succeed in the practice of Sama.

Importance of 'Dama'

Some say: "The practice of Dama is not necessary. It is included in Sama. The Indriyas cannot work independently. They can work only in conjunction with the mind. If the mind is checked, the Indriyas will come under control automatically."

The impish mind will come under control very easily if Dama also is practised. It is a double attack on the enemy from within and without. If the front and the back doors are closed simultaneously, the enemy is caught quite easily. There is no escape for him on any side. By the practice of Dama you do not allow either the Indriyas or the mind to come in contact with the objects. You do not allow the mind to come through the external instrument, the eye, for example, to assume the form of the object.

For the beginners, the mind never remains centred in the ideal, despite rigorous practice of Sama. It tries to run outside towards external objects. If Dama is also practised, it will be of immense help to curb the mind efficiently.

Dama is also practised by a student of Vedanta. Pratyahara corresponds to the practice of Dama. Pratyahara is the practice of a Raja Yogi, or a Hatha Yogi. In the former it follows the practice of Sama; in the latter it follows the practice of Pranayama. In the former the Indriyas are withdrawn by calming or restraining the mind; in the latter the Indriyas are withdrawn by restraining the Prana. The Indriyas can be withdrawn more effectively by

the process of double withdrawal: by withdrawing the mind and the Prana at the same time. It is the mind that moves the Indriyas. It is the Prana that vivifies or energises the Indriyas. Sama and Dama are, strictly speaking, Raja Yogic practices.

Self-Withdrawal

If one gets Viveka or discrimination, Vairagya or dispassion will dawn by itself. If one has Vairagya, Sama will come by itself. Ifone has Sama, Dama will come by itself. If one has Sama and Dama, Uparati will come by itself. Some define Uparati as renunciation of all actions. But you will find in Vivekachudamani a beautiful definition. The best Uparati or self-withdrawal consists in the modifications of the mind ceasing to act by means of the agency of the external objects. According to 'Aparoksha Anubhuti' formula of Sri Sankara, Uparati or extreme abstention is the turning away from the objects of enjoyment.

The mind of the spiritual student, who is established in Uparati, will not be agitated even a bit by the temptation of external objects. They will effect no attraction for him. He will have the same feeling when he sees a beautiful woman as if he has seen only a log of wood. When he looks at a delicious fruit or a palatable dish, he will not be tempted. He will have no craving for them. He will have no craving for any particular dish. He will never say, "I want such and such a preparation for my dinner." He will be satisfied with anything that comes before him when he is to take his meals. This is due to the strength of mind he has developed by the practice of Viveka, Vairagya, Sama, Dama and Uparati.

The mind experiences a wonderful state of calmness and unalloyed spiritual bliss by the above practices. It ceases to crave for the little illusory pleasures of the world. If you have got sugar-candy, your mind will never run after jaggery. You can wean the mind from the object to which it is attached by training it to taste a superior kind of bliss than it could derive from that object.

Other Qualifications

Titiksha is the power of endurance. A Titikshu (ascetic) is able to bear pain, bereavement, insult, heat and cold, without any murmuring. He does not care to redress them. He is free from anxiety. He does not lament on this score. Sraddha is unshakable faith in the existence of God, in the teachings of the Guru and the scriptures, and faith in one's own self. If anyone possesses the above qualifications, one will get Samadhana or one-pointedness of mind, and a burning desire for liberation which is called Mumukshutva. The mind will move naturally towards the inner Self. The student should now approach aGod-realised Guru, learn from him the great scriptures, reflect and meditate upon the significance of the Tat Tvar Asi (That thou art) Mahavakya constantly. He will then attain Self-realisation or Atma-Sakshatkara, and become a liberated sage.

The liberated sage does not see another outside of himself. He sees the whole world within himself. He feels that the man he sees is his own Self. He has no sex-idea. There are no evil thoughts in his mind. Whereas a worldly man sees a woman outside himself and entertains lustful thoughts, the sage does not.

Combined Sadhana

Some students ask: "Shall we practise Viveka, Vairagya, etc., one by one, after mastering one after another or shall we practise all simultaneously?" It depends upon the temperament, taste and capacity of the students. Some like to get perfect mastery over each stage and then to proceed to the next step. Some like to practise all the steps at a time. There is no harm in practising all the steps at a time. On the contrary, it is most effective and desirable. If you develop one quality perfectly, you cannot help cultivating the other qualities. Devote more time in developing that virtue which you are seriously lacking. If you are earnest and sincere in your attempt, you can develop all the virtues.

Some students foolishly say: "There is no necessity for acquiring these means of salvation, these basic qualifications such as Viveka, Vairagya, Sama, Dama, and so on. It is a long, tedious process. The shortest way is to

think of Brahman always, and be a full-blown Vedantin." You can find them talking on Vedanta and posing as a Jnani always. But all cannot be deceived for all times. He only deceives himself, and moulds himself into a perfect hypocrite. If you observe him carefully, you will find that he is very much a worldly man, addicted to worldly appetites.

How can one think of Brahman, when the mind is filled with impurities, when the senses are turbulent? The pseudo-Vedantin may talk forhours on spiritual matters, but at heart he will be mindful of his senses. He may pretend to do meditation but actuallyhe will be building castles in the air and;will be thinking of sensual objects. He may foolishly imagine that hehasright perception and necessary spiritual knowledge, but, in fact, he is a lapdog of his worldly infatuation. You canalways be sure that a spiritual aspirant, who is addicted to worldly ways, is the worst chimera in this holy life. Heisagreat self-deluder and a prize hypocrite. It is only the mind that is rendered pure by the practice of Viveka, Vairagya, Sama, Dama and Uparati, that can have a definite conception of Brahman. Ideas of Brahman do not sustaininarestless, impure mind. Therefore, never neglect to acquire these essential qualifications. Without these, theaspirant has no life, as it were. They are your most precious jewels.

The most important partofSadhana is the construction of a sound base. Unless the base is strong, the superstructure is liable to crumbledown at any moment. The aspirant who has not cared to cultivate Sama, Dama, etc., and build a strong ethical foundation for his spiritual life, is as though putting up a house of cards in spite of Vedantic Nididhyasana, etc., whichcould be fruitful only when the ground is well prepared. Therefore, never forget this most important aspect in thedivine path.

PERSEVERE IN SADHANA

Life is the manifestation of the Divine Power. All life is, therefore, on the move. Nothing remains static. The universal energy works on untiringly and inexhaustibly, operating alike in a tiny speck of dust as in the mighty orb of the sun. Ceaseless progress and renewal is the law of nature.

O aspirants! You are also a centre of this cosmic energy. Activity and advancement are the laws of your being. You must continuously keep advancing on the spiritual path. Do not remain satisfied in having filled up a resolve form or drawn up a daily routine. It is not enough to have a meditation room or a deer skin and a rosary. No doubt, you have attempted to change your old ways of life. But how far have you advanced along the new?

A great sage once said: "Do not stand still even for a moment on the path of Sadhana, for to stand still in the way of holiness and evolution is like stopping your breath and falling back and become weaker than before." Bear this in mind. In the spiritual path, it is a case of progress and regress. There is no comfortable sitting in the fence frequently. To slack is to rust. With a flaming aspiration push forward. Every day must show that you have taken one step forward upon the path. Progress is not to be counted in number of days that have passed in Sadhana. It lies in how far you have outgrown your former ways of thinking and living.

Marks of Progress

What is the extent of your victory over external environments? Do you maintain a calm and balanced mind? Do you remain unaffected by little annoyances and irritations? Are you more ready to forgive and less ready to offend? Has your aspiration grown stronger? Are you doing sincere Sadhana, or are you expecting divine grace to help you to carry out your resolves and vows? Are you waiting to get blessings from saints, without making efforts yourself? Blessings are always there, but unless you are ready to mould yourself blessings are just as useful asa staff and shoes to a traveller who does not care to march ahead.

There was a saint who took up his abode in a cave by the side of a jungle path. He was very industrious by nature. He collected boulders from all around the cave, raised a platform and protecting enclosure. By ceaseless work he soon made the wild dwelling into a perfect miniature rockfort. He cleared all the surrounding space except for one boulder in front of the cave He came to be called "Patthar Baba" or the saint associated with rocks. As he was a great Virakta, many people came for his Darshan. When aspirants frequently asked for his blessings, he kept quiet. But if any one pressed him too much for his blessings, he used to turn towards the little rampart built by him and say, "See, this is the result of exertion, industry." Then he would lead his visitor to the solitary stone and pointing to it said, "Well, you want my blessings. There, look at that stone. It is receiving regularly my blessings, three times a day. I bless it daily at morning, noon and dusk. But I find it in the same condition as before. This is all my blessings have done and that (referring to the ramparts) is the product of application and effort."

Do not look always for external aids. Proceed onwards. Help will come from within where necessary. The distance you have to cover is great, time is short, obstacles are many. Days, months and years fly past rapidly. Every minute is precious. But you are in the same state as before.

No doubt, the Lord is so merciful that if you take one step towards Him, He hurries forward ten steps to meet you. Quite true. But you are required to step forward towards Him first. You perhaps feel that circumstances stand against your progress, that you are everywhere surrounded by unfavourable conditions. Now a man in a valley will never be able to sweep away a mist, but by ascending on the hill he can rise above it. Therefore, do not complain about disadvantages and disabilities. The aspirant should be the last to complain or grumble. It is your folly to sit in the gloom and cry "Light, light". Arise and march forward into sunshine.

Excel in service. Evolve in love. Advance in knowledge. Create opportunities to serve. Learn something new every day. Develop greater devotion to the Lord. Be sincere in Sadhana.Persevere on the path. Let your

progress be continuous. Ceaseless perseverance is the certain safeguard against slipping backward. It is the surest way to success. Never stop or slacken. *Punaschapunah*, again and again, is the Upanishadic dictum.

Chapter Three

AN EXACT SCIENCE

WHATISYOGA?

Yoga does not consist in sitting cross-legged for six hoursorstopping the pulse, or remaining buried under the ground for a week or a month. If one has a curiosity to getpsychic powers, one cannot have success in Yoga. Yoga is a perfect practical system of self-culture, leading to unionwith the Cosmic Soul. It is an exact science which aims at a harmonious development of the body, mind and the psyche. Yoga helps in the coordination and control of the subtle forces within the body and mind. Yoga brings aboutperfection, peace and unalloyed happiness.

Yoga can help you in your business and daily life.You can have calmness of mind at all times by the practice of Yoga. You can have restful sleep. You can haveincreased energy, longevity and a high standard of health. The practice of Yoga will help you to control your emotionsand passions and give you the power to resist temptations and remove the disturbing impressions fromthe mind. It will enable you to keep a balanced mind always, and remove fatigue. It will enable you, above all,tohold communion with the Lord and thus attain the *summum bonum* of existence.

If you want to attain success in Yoga, you will have to control the mind skilfully and tactfully. You will have to use judicious and intelligent methods to mould it. If you use force, it will become more turbulent and mischievous. It cannot be controlled by force. It will jump and toss about more and more. Those who attempt to control the mind by force are like those who endeavour to bind a furious elephant with a silken thread.

Control of mind is a life-long process. Nearly most part of the practice of Yoga consists in disciplining and purifying the mind. A mind which has been thoroughly cleansed of all impurities alone can have enlightenment. A mind which has attained a state of balance in all conditions alone can retain the supreme Knowledge. Through study of scriptures and meditation,one may have occasional glimpses of Truth, but the consciousness of truth will be permanent only when the mastery over mind has been attained.

A Guru or preceptor is indispensable for the practice of Yoga. The aspirant in the path of Yoga should be humble, gentle, merciful and kind. Pride, obstinacy, laziness, gluttony, too much mixing and too much talking are some of the obstacles in the path of Yoga. When you are free from all evil traits, Samadhi or union with the Lord will come by itself.

GOSPEL OF YOGA

God is like an ocean. All beings are like bubbles in it.

There is a single entity, God Almighty, who directs the destinies of all human beings, whatever the creed, colour or culture they may have.

Beauty, goodness and truth are three in one and one in three, and are identical with God who, though above all qualities, manifests Himself through these, so that humanity may evolve.

Atmaivedamsarvam: all this is but the Self or Atman. *Samam sarveshubhuteshu*: the Self is the same in all beings.

All life is one. Realise the oneness of life

God is the fountain of all goodness, through which you may know Him. God is that oneness which is the only truth in all that lives.

Mind

There is no world for man, apart from and independent of his thought.

The existence of the world is not complete by itself. It is not seen without the aid of the mind. There is no such thing as mind apart from thought.

Thoughts constitute the mind. Duality ceases when the mind stops its function and is merged in the cosmic consciousness.

Find out the source of the mind and merge it there. The mind will then cease its faulty perception.

The mind does the function of attention, selection and synthesising of sense impressions. It is the seat of pleasure and pain.

Chitta or the subconscious does the function of remembering. It is the storehouse of impressions, associations and emotions.

Yoga Idealism

Man's freedom is not freedom from action, but freedom in action.

Morality implies self-restraint and service of fellow-beings.

The preliminaries on the spiritual path are a simple and good life, truthfulness, universal goodwill and gradual elimination of anger, greed, lust and egotism.

Divine life leads to freedom and bliss, which is the aim oflife and of Yoga.

The aim of all religions is to lead us along the way which awakens in us the consciousness of the Self.

Religion and life are not two entities but one. Lead the lifedivine daily. Meditate. Study. Serve. Pray.

Meditate regularly and spontaneously. He who meditatesbecomes changed into divinity. He becomes changed into thelikeness of that which he meditates upon.

Be still. Let all the waves of thought subside. In that stillness, when the mind melts, there shines the self-effulgent Atman or pure consciousness.

Find God. Realise Him in and through life. This is a remedy for every ill.

Realisation of God means perfection, liberation, freedom, harmony, abundance, joy, bliss and everlasting peace.

No laws of nature bind a realised soul. Destiny prevails nomore on him. He is free.

BASIC YOGA PRACTICE FOR ALL

There is in the mind of man a strong urge which glues it, as it were, to the objects around him, thus producing a strong attachment.

It is the force of attachment that binds man to the world as a slave. It is attachment that is the root cause for all the miseries and troubles of man.

Sensual enjoyment is attended by various drawbacks, pains, weaknesses, attachment, slave mentality, weak will, exertion and struggle, habit-formation, craving, aggravation of desires, and mental restlessness.

Yoga helps in weaning the mind away from sensual enjoyment

Mind-Control

You must cultivate a balanced mind. How can this be done?

You should try to fix your mind, as often as possible, onGod.

Your hands should work but a part of your mind should be on God.

You should form an outlook which will be balanced in success or failure, gain or loss, victory or defeat, pleasure or pain.

Discipline your mind cautiously by restraint, substitution ofobjective, sublimation and meditation.

Feel and think that you breathe, live and work for God alone and that without His consciousness life is absolutely meaningless.

Learn to discriminate and develop lasting determination by study, reflection and association with the wise.

Make the mind understand the defects of a sensual life. Practise self-analysis, coax the mind, and it will hear your words and gradually cease to wander and then begin to dwell in the centre of its source.

Destroy the false imagination of the mind by disciplining it in a perfect manner through discrimination, enquiry, dispassion and regular meditation.

Broad Outlook

Have a wide outlook, feeling the presence of God in everything.

in every face, and give up attachment to all that is false and untrue, by praying fervently and leading a life of discriminationand moral discipline.

Renounce all your sorrows, fears and anxieties by laying them at the feet of God, and walk in the path laid down by the scriptures.

Understand fully the aim of life and yield not to temptations.

Develop virtuous qualities like humility, forgiveness, tolerance, and eagerly and fervently aspire to attain God-consciousness.

Have faith, interest and attention.

Conserve your energy and utilise it for the higher, spiritual achievements in life. Purify, be just, be true and be sincere in your attempts.

Practicality

Keep the mind fully occupied with good thoughts and meditate upon God at your leisure hours which will enable you to merge in Him.

Mere reading of scriptures and hearing of spiritual lectures will not do. You have to act according to the precepts you learn.

You will have to give your whole heart, mind and soul to practise them. Abhyasa (practice) is the life of Yoga.

Follow the path laid down by your Guru or the teachings of the Gita as best as you can. Give no leniency to the mind. Exact from the mind implicit, strict obedience to their instructions.

Do not fight for rights, but think more about your duties and less about your rights. These rights are worthless and it is a waste of time and energy to fight for individual welfare. But for acommon cause you should fight for justice if you have no egotism

Know things in their proper light. Do not be deluded. Emotion is mistaken for devotion, violent jumping in the air during Sankirtan for divine ecstasy, Rajasic restlessness for divine activities. Tamasic nature, for Sattvic poise, Tandra or sleep for Samadhi, Manorajya or building castles in the air for meditation, physical nudity for the Jivanmukti state.

Perseverance

Understand the laws of the universe and move tactfully in the world and learn the secrets of nature.

If you learn to discriminate between right and wrong and act accordingly, you will save much of your trouble.

You have to fight out the inner battle all through your own self-effort, in order to become victorious. The perversion of intellect will make spiritual pursuit appear to be cloudy and bitter, and sensual pursuit, which is really bitter beneath nervous titillation, will appear to be sweet, due to the force of habit andSamskara.

Worry does great harm to the astral body and the mind. Energy is wasted by worry. It causes despondence and drains the vitality of man. Nothing is gained by worrying. Cultivate a resolute will. Do what your conscience says to be right. Forget the past. Trust in God. Go ahead.

Keep the divine flame burning steadily, with strong determination, invincible will, courage, fixity of mind and a definite purpose in life always in view.

Be not wavering. The doubting Thomas has no future.

Ethics

Never become a fatalist. Think rightly and act rightly, and build your life on a sure ethical foundation.

Never hurt the feelings of others. If by mistake you do so, do not fail to make amends.

Mould your character by purifying the mind through discipline and practice of ethical tenets.

Stick to any rule that appeals to your reason, and follow it with faith and attention.

A man of principles is really a Yogi in the making.

Without good principles, life is rudderless.

Do not conclude or do anything blindly.

Right performance of one's duties brings happiness, quick evolution and freedom.

Thought-Culture

Desire, thought and action are interrelated. Substitute mundane desires by holy aspiration.

It is thought that moves the body to action. There is thought behind every action and if you entertain bad thoughts, you will do bad actions eventually. Therefore, take care of your thoughts first.

Learn to become wise by discrimination and controlling the thoughts and desires. Watch your thoughts carefully and do not allow any evil thought to enter the gates of the mind. If it manages to enter, push it out by substituting a positive thought.

In the beginning, when you sit for meditation, evil thoughts will enter your mind because of the pressure of Samskaras, but do not use your will in driving them out. You will lose your energy. The greater the efforts you make, the more the evil thoughts will return with redoubled force. You should try to be indifferent to them and concentrate on divine thoughts. Thus alone can you overcome evil thoughts.

Meditation

Never miss meditation even for a day. Take care of and company. your diet

Collect all the rays of your mind from external objects and turn the mind towards God. Persevere. Attempt again and again. Struggle hard. You will succeed.

Give up all sorts of cares, worries and anxieties. Rest in the ocean of silence. Relax. Think steadily of the object of your meditation.

Place a picture of your tutelary deity or Om or any other symbol and concentrate steadily on it with eyes open. Close the eyes and visualise. Open the eyes and concentrate. Repeat the process.

Place your trust in God and thirst for His grace.

Do not be moved by difficulties. They strengthen your will, augment your power of endurance and turn your mind towards God. Be optimistic. Submit not meekly to all situations. With steady effort and discipline build your character.

Think rightly and clearly and become a man of measured words. Do selfless service and surrender the fruits of action to God, and pray for His mercy, divine light, purity, and guidance.

Right Endeavour

Cultivate right understanding and right thinking.

Develop cosmic love, eradicate selfishness, inculcate virtuous qualities. Kill impure desires through holy desires.

Do not be lazy. Be up and doing. Tear the veil of ignorance. Worship God in the poor and the sick.

Understand clearly the aim of your life and chalk out the line of endeavour that is congenial to your aim. Work hard to realise the ideal. Have your ideal always before you and try a every step to live up to it.

Develop a strong desire to remove carelessness and forgetfulness. Have confidence in yourself. Be self-reliant.

Keep your mental poise amidst the changing phasesthe world, while doing your duty as best as you can.

Do not expect thanks or appreciation for your work. Do as your duty, without attachment or expectation. Only then w you be freed from the bonds of Karma and your heart will be purified soon.

Keep open the portals of your heart by removing selfishness, greed, lust and wickedness, so that the Almighty Lord Presence you may feel therein.

Abandon all superstitions and narrow-mindedness. Cultivate an indomitable will. Strive ceaselessly for Self-realisation.

God is in our hearts. We have to search Him inside our hearts. This search of God is a question of supply and demand. If you really want God,if there is a demand for God, then the supply will come without fail.

SELF-CONTROL

The withdrawal of the senses is a primary practice in Yoga. The senses always remain in a state of extroversion. Success in Yoga is possible only when they have been brought under control. As the senses cannot do anything independently, control of the mind is also necessary. If you can detach the mind from the senses and the objects, you will be established in the abstraction of the senses.

The senses withdraw from objects even in the case of an ignorant person who practises severe austerities and abstains from all sensual indulgence-it is also apparent in the case of a sick man because of physical weakness-but the taste or inclination or longing for the objects does not totally vanish in them. The aspirant controls his senses through Viveka or discriminative knowledge.

Self-restraint is a continuous process. Eternal vigilance is the essential requisite throughout Sadhana. Even though the aspirant may possess discriminative knowledge and strive his level best to control senses, the old Samskaras may forcibly carry away his mind if he ceases to be vigilant. Although sage Visvamitra was practising severe austerities, he was carried away by his turbulent senses when he came across the celestial nymph, sent by Indra to disturb his austerities, because he was not vigilant.

Just as the child enjoys full security and peace when he is in the lap of his mother, so also the aspirant can enjoy abiding peace only when he has totally surrendered himself at the feet of the Lord. That is possible when the senses are brought under control. Krishna says to Arjuna in the Gita: “Restraining all senses, a man should remain steadfastly intent on me. He has a stable and poised understanding whose senses are under control.”

The senses are endowed with outgoing tendencies. They therefore, drag the mind to the external objects. But the aspirant who possesses discrimination and dispassion, checks the outgoing tendencies through the process of withdrawal andconverging them on the different aspects of his ideal. When the senses have been completely withdrawn from the objects, the aspirant gains equipoise and a clear vision into the nature of things.

Control the eyes by denying the vision of the objects they want to see. Control the tongue by denying the delicacies it wants to eat and through the observance of Mauna. Control each of the senses thus, one by one. Control them also through disciplining the thoughts and purifying the mind by study of good books, holy company and meditation.

RAJA YOGA IN A NUTSHELL

Raja Yoga means "King of all Yogas." It aims at controlling the mental modifications, and uniting the individual soul with the cosmic soul through withdrawal, abstraction and dissolution of the mind. This can be achieved only after you have purified your mind and gained control over your senses.

The eight limbs of Raja Yoga are Yama (self-restraint), Niyama (religious observances), Asana (posture), Pranayama (restraint of breath), Pratyahara (abstraction of the senses). Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (superconsciousness).

Yama and Niyama

Yama is the practice of non-injury, truthfulness, non-deprival or integrity, celibacy and non-covetousness. This is the foundation of Yoga.

Niyama is the observance of the five canons of purity, contentment, austerity, study of religious books and worship andsurrender to the Lord.

Impure motives, lack of celibacy, over-eating, indolence, over-sleeping, false fears, building castles in the air, allurement of minor supernatural powers like clairaudience and clairvoyance, are all obstacles in this path.

Asana and Pranayama

Any comfortable and steady pose is Asana. A steady pose gives concentration of mind. If you have mastery over a posture, it aids meditation. There are different Asanas for physical culture, the practice of which keeps the body strong, sturdy, disease-free, and fit for the practice of Sadhana.

Some of the Asanas such as Sirshasana and Sarvangasana are very useful for the preservation of good health and Brahmacharya (celibacy).

Prana is energy. It is life-breath. It is the life-principle. When Prana vibrates, the mind begins to think. Prana is expended in thinking, willing, acting, talking, etc. If you can control the Prana, you can control the mind easily. Pranayama helps in mental equipoise, and maintenance of good health

Prana manifests as motion, gravitation, magnetism, electricity. The process of the control of the Prana is what is really meant by Pranayama. Pranayama removes diseases of the body, calms the mind and purifies it. It strengthens the intellect and augments the intellectual capacity. It increases the power of memory. When you practise Pranayama, you will have to be careful about your diet. You should avoid over-loading the stomach. You should take light, easily digestible and wholesome food.

Pratyahara and Dharana

Pratyahara is abstraction or withdrawal of the senses from the external objects. Pratyahara checks the outgoing tendency of the senses. The practice demands considerable patience and perseverance. It demands tremendous will-power. During the course of the practice you will have to withdraw the mind again and again from the sense-objects and fix it on the ideal of meditation. One who is well established in Pratyahara can meditate quite easily even in a battlefield. To your

Dharana or concentration is focalising the mind on one single thought. During concentration, the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focussed on the object of concentration. There will be no tossing of the mind when concentration is steady. When there is deep concentration you will experience great joy and spiritual intoxication. You will forget the body and the surroundings.

Concentration increases by curtailing wants and desires, by observing self-restraint, purity and inner harmony, by practising Pranayama, by prayer and steady application. The life you lead, the company you resort to, the books you read, the food you take, should all be congenial to your practice of concentration.

Dhyana and Samadhi

Meditation follows concentration.Themind dwells steadily on the ideal during meditation. Deep meditation cannot come in a day,oraweekoramonth. You will have to struggle hard for along time. Concentration is with effort and meditationasteadyflowofthought without effort. Success in concentration leads to meditation. Later the thoughts cease toflowwhenthemind becomes one with the object of meditation.

The meditatorandthemeditated become one. You then attain the state of the reception of supernatural knowledge. Intuitiondawns.Youexperience supreme bliss. The world does not exist now. There are no pain, sorrow, fear, doubtordelusion.Youonly experience: "I am the immortal Self. All indeed is God. There is nothing but God. There isnoindividual'I'butthe cosmic 'I'."

You feelthatthewholeworldis nothing but pure Consciousness. The tables, the chairs, men, women and all other objectslosetheirexclusiveentity and you feel them to be integrated parts of the cosmic whole. Their worldly valuesarenowlost.Theynolonger distract or bind you. This rare experience will lead you to Nirvikalpa Samadhi, whichisthehighestateofrealisation, without any modification.

PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

Meditation is steadily dwelling on the object of realisation. It is a continuous flow of thought on that object. It is a state of focalised attention. You want to realise God. Therefore you meditate on Him. You want to attain peace, bliss and inner harmony. Therefore you meditate on these qualities which are associated with God. You want to cultivate virtues. Therefore you meditate upon them, one by one, and practise them simultaneously.

Requisites for Meditation

You must have a pure mind if you want to realise God. Unless the mind casts away all desires, cravings, worries, delusion. Pride, lust, attachment, likes and dislikes, it cannot benefit much from ineffective meditation. A glutton or a sensualist, a dullard or a lazy man, cannot practise meditation. He who has controlled the tongue and the other organs, who has Viveka and Vairagya, who eats, drinks and sleeps in moderation, who has destroyed selfishness, lust, greed and anger, can practise meditation easily and attain Samadhi eventually.

Saguna Meditation

Meditation is of two kinds: Saguna (concrete) and Nirguna (abstract). In concrete meditation the aspirant meditates on forms such as of Krishna, Rama, Siva, Vishnu or Jesus. In abstract meditation he meditates on his own Self, at first on the qualitative aspects leading to the actual non-qualitative state.

When you meditate on Krishna, keep His picture in front of you. Look at it with a steady gaze (without winking). Look at all the details of the picture, rotating your attention from face to feet. Do this again and again, with eyes open and eyes closed. Eventually the visualisation should be imprinted on your mind so accurately that you would be able to meditate on the form of Krishna without the aid of the picture. While you do this, associate the qualities of divinity, omniscience, purity and perfection with the deity. If evil thoughts enter the mind, concentrate on the above qualities and on the teachings of Krishna. Repeat mentally “Om Namo BhagavateVaasudevaya.”

Nirguna Meditation

Meditate upon the following formulae: "I am the all-pervading. immortal Self, I am diseaseless, deathless Soul, I am pure, absolute Consciousness, I am distinct from the body, mind and senses; I am existence-knowledge-bliss absolute." Also repeat "Om" mentally while thinking of the infinite nature of Brahman. This is formless meditation, leading to dissolution of the mind.

General Instructions

Have a separate meditation room if possible. Burn incense there. Wash your hands and feet before you enter the room. You should be alone yourself in communion with the Lord. Get up at 4 a.m., and meditate. Have another sitting from 7 to 8 p.m., or 9 to 10 p.m. Sit in front of the Lord's altar in a comfortable posture. Keep the head, neck and trunk in a straight line. Do not lean either forward or backward. Lock the fingers. Relax the mind. Do not make any violent efforts in concentration. Relax all the muscles and nerves. Gently repeat the prayers, concentrating on the meaning. Then do Japa of your Ishta Mantra, with a rosary, while meditating on the form related to it. Concentrate on the form with eyes opened and then visualise it with eyes closed.

It will take some time to tame the mind. The mind will be now and then wandering away from the object of meditation. With patience and steady effort you should bring it back and fix it on the point of meditation. This sort of combat will go on for some months, but ultimately you will succeed.

Give up Rajasic and Tamasic food. Pure and light diet helps in the practice of meditation. Dash cold water on the face to drive away drowsiness. Have a bath if possible. Sit comfortably. Do not shake the body. Keep it firm but relaxed. Breathe slowly. Meditate. When the mind is tired, give it a little rest. Repeat some prayers. Keep the

mind fully occupied with the thought of God and God alone. Lead a perfectly ethical life. Do not talk unnecessarily. Read inspiring, religious books. Observe silence for two hours daily. Do not go to cinemas.

STEPS TO SUPERCONSCIOUSNESS

Spiritual experiences in the early stages vary in different individuals, but the final acme of superconsciousness is one and the same with all seekers. The preliminary experience of one aspirant may not be the same as that of another, of course."

Preliminary Experiences

More and more dispassion and discrimination between right and wrong and the ability to abide by one's ideals, more yearning for liberation, peace, cheerfulness, contentment, fearlessness, unruffled state of mind, indicate that you are steadily advancing on the spiritual path.

Progress is indicated by the lustre in the eyes; brilliance in the countenance; moderation in talk, sleep and eating, and naturally of defecation and micturation; control over mind and senses; selflessness; abstinence from all kinds of injury, through thought, word or deed; wisdom; detachment; absence of laziness and depression; alertness of mind; catholicity of outlook; strict adherence to the path of truth; eagerness to meditate for a long time; and complete lack of worldliness.

There will be disinclination to indulge in worldly company; there will be love for all beings, and a growing feeling that all forms are of the Lord. There will be absence of dislike for any creature, even to those who despise and insult.

There will be strength of mind to meet dangers and calamities, to bear insult and injury, to rise above likes and dislikes.

Visions in Meditation

The aspirant, during meditation, will see different forms of white lights, coloured lights, sometimes like the sun, the moon and the stars. He will experience a pleasant taste and elevating fragrance, would also hear the peeling of bells and other musical notes. He may have visions of the Lord in human form; he may have visions of the Guru, of sages and saints.

The visions may appear persistently or rarely, the nature of the visions being according to the quality of the subconscious. Some seekers may not have any vision at all, but theywill be progressing in the spiritual path. Sometimes pressure on the retina, through concentration, also causes vision. A highly emotional aspirant, with a fertile imagination, could also experience various visions. They are by themselves of no value to spiritual progress. One could see visions and yet be perfectly worldly. The sure indication of progress are the quality of character, balance of mind, purity of heart, possessionlessness, dedication to spiritual life.

High spiritual experiences have nothing to do with colours or sounds. There should be inner joy, peace and harmony. There should be equanimity in success and failure, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour. Attraction and repulsion should not rule the aspirant. There should be cosmic love. The whole world should become the manifestation of the Lord. There should be freedom from all kinds of fears and anxieties. This is the real nature of high spiritual experiences.

Cosmic Consciousness

The state of cosmic consciousness is, naturally, beyond description. It induces awe, supreme joy and unalloyed felicity. The state of cosmic consciousness is below the absolute Consciousness wherein the seer, the sight and the seen, or the knower, knowable and knowledge, merge into the indivisible Reality. In cosmic consciousness there is yet the seer and the seen, the individual soul beholding himself as a part of the whole cosmos. In absolute consciousness, there is no part.

Cosmic consciousness is perfect awareness of the oneness of life. The Yogi feels that the universe is filled with one life in different forms, that even the inert objects have an underlying, vibrating consciousness, that there is no such thing as blind force or dead matter. He gets the eye celestial and experiences bliss beyond explanation. He actually feels that all is himself only, that snakes, scorpions, tigers are as much parts of himself as his own eyes, nose, hands and feet.

He is one with the ether, flower, sun, ocean and sky. He feels the elixir of life, the nectar of immortality, flowing in his veins. He feels that the entire universe is bathed in a sea of all-encompassing love. Yet he has a small residue of individuality, the entity to see and comprehend, which vanishes onmerger with the supreme Reality, as the individual soul leaves the body.

Superconsciousness

The state of Samadhi is all bliss, joy and peace. All mental activities cease in the Nirvikalpa or the highest Samadhi, therebeing no difference between subject and object. There are various stages of Samadhi, with modifications and without, with individuality and without, qualitatively Sattvic in nature andbeyond Sattva, the lower leading to the higher to the highest.Samadhi is not an emotional enthusiasm or an exhilaratingfeeling. It is direct, unique, intuitive experience of spiritual consciousness. It is not an experience that can be attained througha little practice. To attain Samadhi one should be rooted in purity, and must have a high degree of progress in meditation. Stupor is not Samadhi; inertia is not Samadhi. It is a positiveawareness.

None can enter into Samadhi until one becomes a greatly purified soul. The mind should be perfectly controlled and purified. Only when the vessel is fit enough to receive the descent of divine light, could one expect to attain Samadhi. There has to be the annihilation of the lower mind; one has to be dead to all forms of worldly desires, even desires for spiritual prowess.

It is only through Samadhi that one can know the Unknown, see the Unseen, get access into the Inaccessible. The sum total of all mundane knowledge, of humanities and sciences, dwindles into insignificance on the attainment of superconsciousness.

May you all become immortal and drink deep the nectar of joy, bliss and peace, through the attainment of Samadhi.

Chapter Four

THE YOGA OF SELFLESS SERVICE

FOUNDATION OFSPIRITUAL LIFE

A man, abandoning society and activity as evil and shuttinghimself up in seclusion, isolated from mankind, so that he might grow in virtue and into sainthood through meditation, will in all probability be found to be less ready to overlook the transgressions of an erring brother than a practical humanitarian earnestly exerting himself in the field of sincere selfless service. If a monkey or a stray dog happens to enter his cottage or cave and upset his water-pot or run away with his alms, the Ekantavasi Virakta (seclusion-dwelling recluse) may perhaps shout at and curse the animal and nurse a grudge against it for days! He might even beat the offending creature.

Then, again, the admirable virtue of adaptability comes only by mixing and moving among men of many moods, and dealing with those of diverse temperaments. It is through selfless service that one acquires the ability to accommodate oneself to the peculiarities of men and places. If, in order to experience the oneness of the Self or the unreality of the world, you confine yourself to a solitary cell and take to repeating Vedantic formulae, you run the risk of becoming indolent, eccentric and intolerant, instead. By atrophy you will lose what good traits you already had previously. It is to guard against this risk that we have the wise counsel: "Let not virtue wither for want of its exercise."

Subjective Effort

It is evident that the recluse in retreat or the Sannyasin in seclusion may well learn a useful point or two from the Nishkama Karma Yogi and the humble man of righteousness. No doubt, through the method of meditation one may develop several virtues of a subjective type-subjective in that they centre round and concern the Sadhaka's own immediate personality. Through constant contemplation, subjectively one may acquire non-attachment to one's body and an imperviousness to theenvironment, or a victory over the Rajasic urge to wander aimlessly, and so on. Restraint and self-denial, too, could be acquired, to some degree, in seclusion.

On the other hand, it is only through selfless activity that one could acquire the precious gems of purity, patience and humility. Humility especially comes through service alone. In this connection, it is of great profit to remember one point of immense practical value, i.e., of all virtues, humility forms the basis. It is only when a man is humble and feels that there is much which he does not possess and has to acquire, that there arises in him the eager desire to grow into those noble qualities he is deficient in. Here begins his systematic endeavour and attempt to acquire and possess them.

Cultivation of Virtues

The proud and arrogant man has little scope for growth, because he feels that he knows everything. There is that self-sufficiency in his pride which leads him to think that there remains nothing for him to strive for and to acquire. Therefore, it is said that humility is the fruitful source of all virtues, and that everything that is kind and good naturally grows from it. Generosity and kindness, too, are the outcome of active contact with the suppliant and the needy, the helpless, the wretched, the distressed. Herein lies the unique, distinctive quality of Nishkama Karma or service reverently done as worship of the Almighty, without any expectation.

Moreover, certain noble traits exist in man in dual aspect, latent and manifest. For example, the latent quality of purity is manifest as chastity in actual life. Fearlessness becomes manifest as positive courage when a sudden crisis calls it forth, when a dangerous emergency arises. A habitual state of self-restraint manifests itself as

a deliberate act of self-control in the face of an actual temptation. So far as complete and balanced development of both the aspects is concerned, Karma Yoga becomes indispensable.

Ideal of Common Good

Again, subjective virtues, developed by a life of seclusion and isolation to attain to fullness and perfection, should be actively exercised, in the service of others. One must not rest satisfiedwith merely eliminating the negative traits in oneself, in being virtuous in a negative way. There must be a positive passion for putting into practice the good in us for the enhancement of the joy and welfare of all creatures. Only then would these virtues justify themselves; only then would they become ripe fruits, or fully blossomed flowers, as it were. One cannot be compassionate at heart, and yet do nothing for the suffering of others. The virtues must expand in their breadth and from the individual circle gradually extend to those around oneself, then to all humanity and finally become all-embracing and cosmic.

Development and progress, if they are to extend thus into infinity, must be dynamic. On the path of moral and spiritual unfoldment, in one's quest of happiness through a life of quiescence, there is the danger of stagnation setting in at some stage or other. This is the reason why many aspirants fail to reach ethical perfection even after years of seclusion and meditation. Selfless and loving service should, therefore, never be underestimated and neglected.

Humility

Finally, one would do well to bearinmindanimportant point. It has been seen how humility forms the fundamental basis of all good.Then,tothevirtuesthat are acquired with great toil and patient effort, it is humility again that acts as the sustainerandvigilantpreserver. Humility is the shield and armour against the archenemy of the aspirant-moral and spiritualpride.

Having progressedconsiderablyinthepath of virtue, the virtuous man will unconsciously fall a prey to vanity. An insidious feelingofself-approbationwillcreep in unnoticed. This will later manifest itself in the form of a sort of indulgent attitudeto,andaloftycontemptfor, those who are not following a similar life. Such subtle moral and spiritual vanity is morepotentforharmthanordinary pride.

Self-righteousnessisoneoftheworsttraits. It is more indicative of the whetting of one's own vanity than the good of others. Forcingofone'sviewsonsomeone is not the job of the aspirant. He should impress and inspire through his own example.

The ideal of humilityconstantlykeptaliveby a ceaseless exercise of it in service is the only sure armour against vanity and self-seeking.Itshouldprotectthe striving seeker from the pitfalls of pride and Vedantic arrogance. He who effaces hislittleselfthroughalife of motiveless, humble and loving service with Narayana-bhava or Brahma-bhava (attitudeofworshipofGod), obtains a unique happiness and peace thereby. Who can guage the exquisite joy that onethusexperiences?May all, therefore, realise the supreme importance of cultivating noble virtues, throughselflessservice.May all perceive the indispensable necessity of actively exercising them and readily and cheerfullyservingasNishkama Karma Yogis!

PATH OF DEDICATED SERVICE

The practice of Karma Yoga prepares the aspirant for the reception of the knowledge of God. It makes him duly qualified for the study of Vedanta. Ignorant students jump at once to Jnana Yoga without having a preliminary training in Karma Yoga. That is why they fail miserably to realise Godhead. Impurities lurk in their mind. They only talk of God. They indulge in all sorts of useless controversies, vain debates and dry, endless discussions. In other words, they are lip-Vedantins only. What is wanted is practical Vedanta through ceaseless selfless service.

Self-Denial Through Service

Develop keen enthusiasm for detached, selfless service. You must plunge yourself into selfless activity. You must work incessantly for the good of others. You must nurse the sick with the feeling that you are nursing the body of God. Gradually you will understand the glory and splendour of unselfish work. You will become a changed being with a purified heart and an enlightened mind.

If you ignore your own pleasures and comforts for the sake of helping others, you are really a worthy student in the path of spirituality. Many aspirants prefer to do some comfortable work such as writing, arranging books in the library, holding classes. They dislike hard work such as hewing wood, cleaning utensils and bed-pans, and nursing the sick. They consider these as menial work. They have not tried to understand the real spirit of Karma Yoga. They are yet easy-going aspirants.

A real Karma Yogi will take upon his shoulders the most responsible, difficult and the most uninteresting type of work and kill his own little self just to help others. He willingly undergoes pain and suffering in order to serve and please others.

Pseudo-Aspirants

To hold the breath for two hours, to do Sirshasana for three hours, to tell the beads for twenty hours, to be in Jada-Samadhi for forty days in an underground cell, to chant Om in the forests for hours together, to shed buckets of tears while singing the Lord's Names-all these are of no avail, unless one has a burning love for the Divine manifest in all beings and a fiery spirit of serving Him in the suffering.

Aspirants of the present day are sadly lacking in these two indispensable qualifications, and that is the root cause why they do not make any headway in their meditation in solitude.

I have seen several devotees in all my experiences in the spiritual line-devotees who chant "Hare Rama, Hare Krishna" day in and day out. These devotees will never approach a sick man, even while he is in a dying condition, and give him a cup of milk or water and ask: "What do you want, brother? How can I serve you?" Out of curiosity they will be looking at him from a distance. Can there be an iota of real benefit in their devotion or meditation? A living Narayana in the form of the sick patient is in a dying state; they have not got the heart to go and serve him or even speak a few kind and encouraging words, when the patient's life is trembling in the balance. How can they hope for God-realisation when they have not got the eyes to see God in all beings and serve Him in the needy?

Qualifications of a Karma Yogi

A Karma Yogi should be absolutely free from greed, expectation, lust, anger and egotism. He should have tolerance, adaptability, sympathy, cosmic love and mercy. He should be able to adjust and adapt himself to the ways and habits of others. He should have an amiable and loving disposition. He should have a cool and well balanced mind.

A man who gets easily irritated and who can be offended by trifling things is absolutely unfit for the path of Karma Yoga. He should speak sweet, gentle words. He should bear insult, disrespect, despisal, censure, disgrace,

harsh words, heat and cold, any discomfort, even ungratefulness, without a little murmur. Such a man becomes a good Karma Yogi and reaches the goal quickly. He obtains the knowledge of God, even without the help of the scriptures. He will realise the one in all and the all in one. The world is nothing but a manifestation of God. Service of humanity is service of God. Service is worship.

Mental Attitude During Service

Never grumble or murmur when you serve others. Take delight in serving. Always think that the Lord has given you a rare opportunity to improve, correct and mould yourself by service, when you serve a suffering man. Be grateful to that man who has given you a chance to serve him.

Watch for opportunities to serve. Create opportunities. Never miss a single chance.

Fix the mind at the lotus feet of the Lord and give the hands to work. Repeat His name mentally. You can realise God even while remaining in the world and devoting yourself to selfless service. You need not retire to Himalayan caves or jungles.

A Karma Yogi should serve without any idea of agency. Without expectation of fruit or reward. He should not even expect a return of appreciation, gratitude and respect from the people whom he serves. He should not be attached to his service. He should feel that he is an instrument in the hands of God. Remember that it is the mental attitude of divine feeling that does immense good. The Karma Yogi must be balanced in success and failure, gain and loss, victory and defeat, pleasure and pain.

Be Sincere Always

The aspirant must always be sincere at heart. He must not run after the shadowy toys of name and fame. Name and fame are illusory. Jesus Christ says: “Your left hand should not know what the right hand does.” Be meek and humble when you serve. Do not be obtrusive. Do not show off. Let not others know of your good deeds; if they know let it be in spite of yourself. Be polite and courteous. Do what is expected before being asked. Always try to cultivate the right mental attitude and inner spiritual strength to practise selfless service and realise Godhead in this very life.

BEST YOGA FOR MODERN MAN

It is my firm belief that disinterested service is the greatest force to inspire and elevate man to high levels of evolution. It brings about an all-round development of man's character, makes him manly and effects a spontaneous spiritual awakening. Selfless service is indeed most essential for the physical, moral and spiritual regeneration of the youth of the world.

The practice of Karma Yoga is very necessary for developing important virtues. Virtues can be developed by service alone. Without possessing the basic virtues, one cannot dream of attaining God-realisation, in spite of the Vedantic feeling of oneness. Tolerance, equanimity, kindness, mercy, fellowship, adaptability, humility, goodness of heart, and broadmindedness can be cultivated only by the practice of Karma Yoga. The raw diamond requires cutting and polishing before it gives out its real luminous colour. Even so, the raw aspirant requires constant rubbing and polishing through service and contact with the people of different temperaments. If he can please others even amidst trying circumstances, if he can keep up a cheerful countenance in spite of difficulties, if he can maintain equanimity in the bustle of a city and can acquire concentration of mind, it clearly proves that he has outgrown his external environments and that he is ready for spiritual enlightenment.

Willing Helpfulness

Sitting with closed eyes in a room bolted from within is no true Sadhana, if the people around happen to be in agony or in trouble. Selfishness and Sadhana can never go together. The aspirant must subordinate his own interests to those of others. He who attends on a helpless man when he is in great distress does more Sadhana than a man who practises meditation and Asana and Pranayama. If one does service to the needy for one hour, it is equal to meditation for six hours. There is no dearth of opportunities for service. A merciful doctor who attends on a helpless, poor patient at midnight, without any fees. Is a better Yogi than the Dhyana Yogi who passes along the road silently when he sees a poor man in a famished, dying condition, without even speaking to him an encouraging word, without even asking "Brother, what do you want? Can I help you in any way?"

To a real Karma Yogi meditation comes automatically and the knowledge of the Upanishads dawns easily. He gets all knowledge from the book of knowledge within through the grace of God. Mere service alone is not enough either. In the early morning the Karma Yogi should spend some time in Japa, Kirtan, meditation, study of religious books, and a little of Asana and Pranayama. During work also he may repeat the name of God silently. He can have another sitting for meditation before retiring to bed at night.

The Sadhaka engaged in selfless service may at times encounter vexation and disappointment. But let him proceed undaunted. Let him be staunch in his devotion to duty. His sincerity will turn all obstacles into aids; for the Lord Himself will mysteriously help and sustain him in his work. This has been invariably the experience of all self-sacrificing Sadhakas. Therefore, let courage and trust in God be every moment your watchwords.

Means to Realisation

The practice of Karma Yoga is a sure means to develop your devotion to the Lord and to attain the Vedantic realisation of oneness. Without its practice no one can even dream of attaining either Bhakti or Jnana even through years of effort. Service is Bhakti expressed through action. The true expression of love is not through words, but through service. Jnana or the oneness of life is experienced through service of the one Self in all. In the plant of Karma Yoga blossoms the flowers of Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga.

Karma Yoga is the best Yoga for the modern man. It enables you to attain God-realisation quickly. King Janaka was a dynamic Karma Yogi. Mahatma Gandhi had exalted himself through Karma Yoga. There is in the daily routine of life a vas field for everyone to purify and elevate oneself. Even in family life, Karma Yoga is an essential requisite. If everybody was selfish, there will be no peace at home. Strong attachment breeds possessiveness, which is a selfish trait, and is a negation of true love. Adaptability, amity and understanding, a little of self-denial

and cooperation, help in the promotion of peace in the house. All these can be effected through Karma Yoga. Duty for duty's sake, without expectation which is the bane of worldly life, without inordinate likes and dislikes, without selfish attachment, offering all actions to the Lord as worship done as an instrument in His hands, should be the ideal.

Glory to selfless workers! May you all rejoice in bliss eternal by doing selfless service and singing the Lord's Name!

WHAT IS EGOTISM?

Ego or egotism or egoism or Ahamkara is the self-asserting principle of the individual soul which gives him a sense of distinction, separation, differentiation, and puts up a barrier between himself and others. It is the ego which has created the idea of separateness from God. It is the veiling power of Maya which keeps man in ignorance. It is the ego which is the root cause for human suffering and birth and death.

The ego identifies itself with the body, mind and senses. Wherever you find the play of egotism, there are "mineness," selfishness, likes and dislikes, lust, anger, greed, hypocrisy, pride, jealousy, delusion, arrogance, conceit, impertinence, craving, clinging to objects, attachment to name and form, the idea of agency or "doership" and "enjoyership."

Annihilation of Egotism

The process of the annihilation of egotism plays a major part in all spiritual practices. It is the barrier that must be pulverised if the individual soul has to merge in the cosmic whole. No amount of Sadhana will be of any use unless this is done. Cultivation of humility alone is not indicative of the eradication of egotism. It is a long process, and a very difficult one.

In Karma Yoga it is done through self-effacing service of others, by placing the interests and the welfare of other people above one's own; in Bhakti Yoga it is effected through self-surrender; in Raja Yoga through merger of the individuality of the meditator in the meditated upon, i.e., God; in Jnana Yoga it is attained through the realisation of the four Vedantic formulae: *Aham Brahma Asmi, Tat Tvam Asi, Prajnanam Brahma, Ayam Atma Brahma*.

You must have a very clear understanding of the nature of the ego if you want to annihilate egotism. It is done through the eschewing of desire, craving, "mineness," "I-ness," pride and arrogance. Control of the senses plays a major part in the overcoming of egotism.

Egotism assumes various subtle forms. Gross egotism is not so dangerous as the subtle forms of egotism. Institutional egotism is a subtle form of attachment. The man identifies himself with the institution and gets associated with his institution or cult or creed. He forsakes broadmindedness, catholicity. Mental charity

Play of Ego

The working of egotism is very mysterious. It is difficult to detect its vanous ways of working. It needs a subtle and sharp intellect to find out its operation. If you practise introspection daily in silence, you will be able to find out its mysterious ways of working

This ego likes its own birth-place and province, the people of the province, its own mother-tongue, its own relations and friends, its own ways of eating, mode of dressing, etc. It has its own predilections and preferences. It likes to associate its name and form with the work done, even though its nature be spiritual.

This ego wants to exercise power and influence over others. It wants titles, prestige, status, respect, prosperity, house, wife and children. It wants self-aggrandisement. It wishes to domineer and rule over others. If anybody points out its defects, its vanity feels offended. If anyone praises it, it is elated. Thus the ego says: "I know everything; he does not know anything. What I say is quite correct; what he says is quite incorrect. He is inferior to me; I am superior to him." It forces others to follow its ways and views.

This ego will lurk like a thief when you do selfless service. It will induce you to associate your little self with the work you do. You will have to muster this ego through constant practice of self-subordination and humility with wisdom.

One of the main objectives of Karma Yoga is the eradication of egotism. In the long run, if you happen to slacken your vigilance, you will be filled with the so-called spiritual egotism.You will not take interest in any form of work unless your name is associated with it. Even though you might wish to disseminate spiritual knowledge, you will be always desirous ofSelf-glory and try to justify it through all sorts of childish arguments. Nothing can be worse in the life of a spiritual seeker.Therefore, be vigilant always.

Chapter Five

THE YOGA OF DEVOTION

HOW TO ATTAINGOD-REALISATION

There are three things in this world which are mostpreciousand materialise only on account of the grace of the Lord, i.e., the human birth, the longing for liberationandtheprotecting care of a perfected saint. The man, who, having done virtuous actions in previous births, obtainsadiscerning intellect but is foolish enough not to exert for Self-realisation, verily commits spiritual suicide, forhekillshisinner potentialities by clinging to things unreal.

Pure love or devotion to God is one of themodesforattaining God-realisation. Pure love is the rarest of all flowers. It is cultivated in the hearts of the devotees.Itissupreme attachment to the lotus-feet of the Lord. It springs from the bottom of the devotee's heart. Thereisagenuine, natural, spontaneous longing to realise God in one's heart. Just as a fish cannot live without water,soalsoatrue devotee cannot live without the presence of God even for a day.

Renunciation

There is no hope of immortality by means of any kind of material riches. The Srutis boldly and emphatically declare: "Neither by rituals, nor by progeny, nor by riches, but by renunciation alone one can attain immortality." It is indicative of the renunciation of mundane attachments, for the love of God. Mere giving up of the objects of enjoyment alone cannot really constitute true and sincere renunciation. It consists in renouncing egotism, meanness, selfishness, attachment, body-idea, desires and cravings. Even the greatest of persons will, in course of time, return to dust and ashes. Countless kings and emperors and multi-millionaires have come upon this world, but only to leave empty-handed. Therefore, do not attach undue importance to mundane objects, and material values. They have their limited use, but do not get lost in them.

Why should one realise God? Because God-realisation gives you real freedom from the earthly wheel of birth and death, and bestows on you supreme peace and illimitable and unalloyed felicity God is our inner ruler, who is free from sin, undecaying, undying, and free from sorrow, hunger and thirst. He is the only reality that is really to be sought and that one must wish to realise.

Universal Love

There is no lasting bliss in perishable objects. In the infinite alone is true bliss. The Yoga of devotion points the way to attain the infinite. It cleanses the heart, steadies the mind, elevates the emotions, sublimates the impulses. It transmutes base desires into spiritual urges. It transfigures the animal in man into a divine being. It turns one's mind from the miseries of the world to the protecting feet of the Lord.

Vedanta without devotion is dry intellection. Pure love is the spontaneous outpouring of affection and devotion, not only for the Divine, but also for all creation. One cannot love God, and yet be blind to the suffering of His children. Therefore, divine love means universal love. Physical love is passion and delusion. Universal love is unselfish love. When love is selfish, it ceases to be love. God is love. Love is God. God is all-pervading. Therefore, love also should be all-inclusive. Selfishness, greed, lust, vanity, pride, hatred, jealousy and anger constrict the heart and stand in the way of developing universal love.

Love for God takes various forms in the heart of the devotee, e.g., in hearing the scriptures, meditating upon them, in singing the glories of God and reciting His Names, in serving and worshipping His image in the temple as well as His creation in the temple of the world. God is attainable only through absolute faith, inner

purification and self-surrender. It is only a pure heart that can love God. It is only an unsoiled flower that can be offered in worship. Just as by taking food hunger is satiated and the body is nourished, so also through love of God all desires are satiated and the soul is nourished. There is no half measure in devotion. The devotee's mind is ever fixed on the feet of the Lord. His whole mind, heart and soul are given to God.

Right Conduct

No development of divine love or devotion is possible without right conduct. Just as a disease can be cured by medicine as well as dietetic adjustment, so also the disease of Samsara can be cured by devotion and right conduct. Devotion is the medicine. Right conduct represents dietetic adjustment. To speak the truth, to love all beings, not to hurt the feelings of others in thought and word and deed, not to speak harsh words to anyone, not to get angry towards anybody, not to abuse others or speak ill of others, and to see God in all names and forms, are the ideals of right conduct. Without right conduct there cannot be any spiritual life. Devotion to God without an ethical life is hypocrisy.

That from which this universe has evolved, that with which this universe subsists, and that in which this universe dissolves, is God or the Supreme Being. He is the highest of the high and the lowest of the low. Many are His names and forms. In Him there is neither east nor west, neither light nor darkness, neither good nor evil. Yet He is associated with all that is positive, so as to make the people evolve towards perfection, on the attainment of which alone God can be realised.

O nectar's sons! Wake up! Open your eyes immediately. There is no time to be lost. Grasp the essence. Death awaits you every moment. Remember the saints. Remember God. Sing His Name. Cultivate devotion. Develop ethical virtues. Feel His indwelling presence everywhere. Realise Him in this very birth.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR GOD-REALISATION

The personal aspect of the Supreme Being is termed Isvara, Allah, Hari, Jehovah, Father in heaven, Krishna, Siva, etc. The impersonal aspect is called the "Brahman" by the Vedantins, the "Unknowable" by Herbert Spencer, the "Will" by Schopenhauer, the "Absolute" by Bradley and the "Substance" by Spinoza.

"Remove selfishness. Calm the passions. Remove egotism. Purify the heart. Analyse your thoughts. Scrutinise your motives. Realise God." This has been the essence of the preachings of all prophets, seers and sages, of all times. Read the teachings of the Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Confucius, Chaitanya, Sankara, or any other prophet. This is the essence of their gospels. This is the way to God. God-realisation is your chief duty in life.

Just as a charioteer restraints the restless horses with the reins, so also you will have to curb the restless senses through the reins of Viveka and Vairagya (discrimination and dispassion). Then alone you will have a safe journey to God.

Righteousness, Self-Surrender

Be righteous always; never deviate from the path of righteousness. You are born to practise righteousness and lead a virtuous life. Truth is established in righteousness. Stand upright. Be bold. Be fearless. Practise truth.

A man who speaks the truth, who is merciful and liberal, who has forgiveness and peace, who is free from fear, wrath and greed, who is innocent and helpful, is fit for God-realisation.

You cannot attain God-realisation if you have no humility and if you do not make ungrudging, unreserved, unconditional self-surrender to the Lord. The Lord knows what is good for you, better than you do. To resign yourself absolutely to His Will, while doing your duty is a higher form of worship than visiting temples and doing artificially ritualistic worship. The Lord does not want your external show. He wants your heart. Say: “Thy Will be done; I am Thine, all is Thine” from the bottom of your heart. Be sincere. Aspire fervently for God-realisation.

It is simple foolishness to think that you are separate from the rest of the world. You are one with all. In injuring another you injure yourself. In loving others you love yourself. Separativeness is ignorance. Unity is eternal life.

O friends! It is not very difficult to have realisation of God. It is not very difficult to please Him. He is everywhere, within all. He is seatedinyour hearts. Think of Him always. Pray fervently: “O Lord! Have mercy upon me. Open my inner eye. Let me haveThy glorious vision. Thou art Patitapavana (purifier of the fallen), Bhaktavatsala (lover of the devotees),Deenadayalu (merciful towards the helpless). Just as the bird protects its young ones under its wings, so alsoprotect me under Thy wings, O ocean of mercy!”

ASPIRE FERVENTLY, APPLY TENACIOUSLY

Spiritual life is not an idle talk. It is actual living in God-Consciousness. It is a transcendental experience. It is a life of fullness and perfection.

Be rooted in ethics. Be just. Know what is right. Keep your promise. Be noble and impartial. Be like the ocean in depth of devotion and like the Himalayas in firmness. Cultivate peace in the garden of your heart by removing the weeds of lust, hatred, greed, selfishness and jealousy. Know and feel always that you are a child of the all-pervading, immortal consciousness, the Father in heaven, the Lord in your heart.

Rely on your own self. Be courageous, candid and modest. Respect your superiors. Be ever vigilant. Have perfect control over anger and lust. Act according to the words of sages and saints. Endure suffering patiently. Be patient and persevering. Be devoted to the Lord. Purify your mind through Japa. Sit in a solitary place for sometime daily. Withdraw the senses from the external objects. Bring the mind under your control.Turn it towards God.

Supply and Demand

God-realisation is a question of supply and demand. Do you really want God? Do you really thirst for His grace? Have you got real spiritual hunger? Only he who thirsts for God will develop real love. Unto him alone He will reveal his real nature.

Pray fervently like child Prahlada. Sing like Mira. Repeat His Name like Valmiki, Tukaram and Tulasi Das. Do Kirtan like Gauranga. God is love. Through the cultivation of pure love you can realise Him quickly. Have Satsanga with Sadhus, Sannyasins and devotees. This will give you Viveka, Vichara and Vairagya, as well as spiritual strength and peace of mind. By regular Satsanga your mind will be saturated with thoughts of God, with divine glory, with divine presence, with sublime, soul-awakening spiritual ideals. Thus, only will you be established in the divine consciousness.

Potent Remedy

The Name of the Lord is a potent, unfailing antidote for those who are bitten by the serpent of Samsara. It is the nectar that can confer immortality and perennial peace. Repeat the Name of the Lord always and attain the fearless state. You can repeat any divine Name you like. All names of the Lord are equally potent

Sing the Lord's glory Worship the Lord with all your heart and with all your mind. Remember Him always.

All your miseries will come to an end. Your heart will be purified. The Lord will soon reveal Himself to you. You will truly feel His presence everywhere. Pray fervently to the Lord for the descent of His light and grace. Crave for His mercy. Yearn for communion with Him. Melt the mind in divine love. Burn the lower nature in the fire of devotion.

Man is not a helpless being. He has a free will of his own. Self-effort ensures divine grace. Therefore, overcome all your unfavourable circumstances by right aspiration and application. Have courage. Be bold. Never despair. You will surely succeed. There is nothing in this world which cannot be achieved by a man of determination, perseverance and the right kind of effort.

METHODS OF GOD-COMMUNION

Let God be your all in all. Your sole aim or ambition in life should be to realise Him. God wants you to be His simple, trusting and loving child. Worldly objectives like wealth, learning and position do not count in the long run. God looks at your inner motive. If He finds you sincere, guileless and pure, He becomes yours. If you are sympathetic to the distressed, kind towards all creatures, forgiving, patient and self-sacrificing, God bathes you in the radiance of His grace.

In all humility approach Him in your heart-for there He dwells the Master of your life. Let your love for Him be such that your mind thinks only of Him even in the midst of your pre-occupations in the world. True devotion for God makes you pine for Him day and night. A slow fire caused by His separation burns in your heart like a steady flame. It consumes all impurities of the mind and prepares you for His vision.

Glory of Divine Name

God's Name is sweet. There is a way of repeating it that can give you joy, and make you the very embodiment of joy. In the first place, surrender yourself to Him, accepting Him as the sole reality pervading all life and causing all movements in the universe. Feel that you are nothing before Him. As an individual you are insignificant in comparison. Know that you are nothing and He is everything. In this spirit repeat His Name. His Name is simply wonderful in its potency. It can purify, elevate and enlighten you thoroughly. Repeat the Name of God constantly, with faith and devotion. It is the key that opens the portals of heaven. This heaven is in your heart. His Name also serves as the lamp that illumines the path leading to Him. Call upon God as you call your mother. Let all the purest and deepest feelings of your heart be concentrated in the call. Few realise the glory of the divine Name. Sages and saints have sung of its glory in ecstatic words. May His Name ring in the hearts of all. Let its sweet music charm the ears of all. Let it always remain on the tongues of all people and fill them with ecstasy.

Everlasting Principle

God is truth and life. He is the everlasting principle-the basis of all manifestation, nay, manifestation itself. Because of Him everything exists. His all-pervading presence is responsible for the activities of all beings and creatures. His nature is absolute peace. He is infinite love and immortal joy. He is the very source of our existence. He is the greatest originator. It is by His will that we move and act.

Know God as such; meditate on Him as such. You will find that you, as an individual-separate from your fellow-beings, from the world and from the great Spirit that permeates all-are false. You will then feel yourself one with the ocean of divine existence, in all its aspects. You will attain freedom from the bondage that made you so long a miserable being. God's power and glory alone are real. Recognise this truth, and experience unalloyed peace and ecstasy. Your eyes will now be filled with God-vision, and your heart with the luminous love that radiates and envelops all beings in this world.

'UPASANA' OR WORSHIP OF GOD

Upasana means worship. It literally means "sitting near" God Upasana is approaching the chosen ideal or object of worship by meditating on it in accordance with the teachings of the scriptures and the Guru, and dwelling steadily on a single ideal (God), the flow of thought being like the flow of oil poured from one vessel to another.

Upasana is of two kinds, namely, Pratika Upasana and Ahangraha Upasana. Pratika means a symbol. Pratika Upasana is Saguna Upasana (with name and form and quality). Ahangraha Upasana is Nirguna Upasana or meditation on the formless, attributeless and transcendental Brahman, which is possible at first on the basis of the Vedantic formulae and then rising above them after the meditator has become an adept.

Two Kinds of Worship

Meditation on idols or pictures of the Lord such as of Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Siva and Devi is Pratika Upasana. The blue expansive sky, the all-pervading space, the omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence of the Reality, are also Pratikas leading to abstract meditation or Nirguna Upasana.

Hearing of the glory of the Lord, singing His Names, remembrance of His forms, service of His idols; through offering flowers, etc., prostration, prayer, chanting of Mantras, self-surrender, service of devotees and service of humanity with Narayana Bhava-all these constitute Saguna Upasana.

Chanting of Om with Atma Bhava, service of humanity with Atma or Brahma Bhava, meditation on such words as Soham, Sivoham, or on the great utterances such as *Aham Brahma Asmi, Ayam Atma Brahma*, after sublating the illusory vehicles through "Neti-Neti" ("not this, not this") doctrine, constitute Ahangraha Upasana or Nirguna Upasana, which is a part of Para Bhakti or transcendental devotion.

Benefits of Worship

Upasana changes the mental attitude, destroys Rajas and Tamas, and fills the mind with Sattva or purity. Upasana destroys worldly desires, cravings, egotism, lust, hatred, anger and greed. Upasana turns the mind inward and eventually bestows on the devotee the vision of the Lord, frees him from the wheel of births and deaths, and confers on him immortality and perennial peace and bliss.

The mind becomes that on which it meditates upon. As you think so you become. This is the immutable psychological law. There is a mysterious power in Upasana or divine worship and meditation which makes the devotee one with the Lord.

Through the Yoga of devotion the devotee establishes the nearest and the dearest relationship with God. He cultivates slowly any or all of the five Bhavas, according to his temperament, taste and capacity. The five Bhavas are Santa (peaceful) Bhava, Dasya (submissive) Bhava, Sakhya (friendly) Bhava, Vatsalya (filial) Bhava, and Madhurya (ecstatic) Bhava. The last Bhava is the culmination of Bhakti. It is merging or absorption in the Lord. The devotee adores the Lord. He constantly remembers Him. He chants the divine Name and prays and prostrates at the feet of the Lord. He does total self-surrender, obtains divine grace, holds communion with God, and gets absorbed in Him eventually.

NINE WAYS IN BHAKTI YOGA

The nine ways in Bhakti Yoga are the methods through which a devotee attains the supreme ideal of life, God-realisation. Any devotee can take up any of these methods and reach the highest state. The path of Bhakti is the most beautiful among all and is not against the nature of human emotions, but is intended to sublimate them. It slowly and gradually takes the individual to the Supreme without frustrating one's human instincts. It is not a direct assertion of the identity with God but a progressive realisation of Him, through superimposition of human qualities on Him.

Sri Rama gives the following means of devotion when he speaks to Sabari, an aboriginal woman. First is the company of realised saints or noble devotees. Second is the recitation of the Lord's glories. The third is the devotional worship of God. The fourth is the devotional singing of His divine qualities. The fifth is Japa or repetition of His Name with firm faith and concentration.

The sixth is strict self-discipline through the practice of perfect withdrawal of the senses and the mind from worldly objects, corresponding to Pratyahara in Raja Yoga. The seventh is the practice of perceiving the whole world as manifestation of the Lord and of regarding the saints with highest veneration. The eighth is contentment in whatever one gets and never finding faults in others. The ninth is to deal without trickery or fraud with one and all, to depend upon God and be indifferent to pleasure and pain. The exact definitions are given below.

The sincere devotee tries to practise these nine modes of devotion to God to the best of his ability. These can be practised, in different degrees, by one and all, irrespective of one's avocation.

Sravana

Sravana is hearing of the Lord's Name and of his spiritual qualities as well as glories and stories connected with His divine name and form. The devotee gets absorbed in the hearing of these and his mind merges in the thought of the Divine. It cannot then think of negative things. The mind loses, as it were, its charm for worldly objects. The devotee remembers the Lord only, and sees Him in his dreams.

One cannot have the opportunity for Sravana without the company of saints or devotees. Mere reading, by oneself, the scriptures is not enough. Doubts will crop up. They cannot be solved by oneself unless considerable progress has been made. Hence the need for the company of saints. An experienced man is most necessary to instruct the devotee on the true significance of the various aspects of the Divine. The company of the wise is, as it were, a boat to cross across the ocean of earthly existence.

Without Satsanga or holy company Sadhana does not become perfect and strong. The fort of Sadhana or spiritual discipline and aspiration should be built on the foundation of Satsanga. Mere austerities are not the end of Sadhana, they are a means to the discipline of body, mind and senses. Satsanga illumines the devotee and removes his doubts and impurities. The company of holy men puts a break on worldly attachments, and enables one to shape one's perspective. Only by putting an end to all attachments, the highest is attained. This does not mean callousness, but absence of slavishness.

Kirtan

Kirtan is singing of the Lord's glories and Names, singly and in chorus. The devotee is thrilled with divine emotion. He loses himself in the love of God. He gets horripilation of the body due to extreme love of God. He weeps in silence, thinking of the glory of God. His voice becomes choked as he enters into a state of divine fervour. But there should be self-restraint and no exhibition.

The devotee is ever engaged in reciting the Lord's Name mentally, even while at work. He is full of compassion and does not betray selfishness. He requests all to join in Kirtan. He sings without shyness or

affectation. He makes others inspired and charged with divine fervour. He does not sing to show off his musical talents. An exhibitionist devotee makes a fool of himself.

The Lord knows the inner secrets of all hearts, and one cannot cheat Him. Kirtan, in melodious tunes, is highly elevating Japa and Kirtan are the most potent methods for spiritual elevation for the common man, provided there is goodness of heart and ethical discipline.

Man is an erotic being. He loves himself, and seeks to satiate his physical love in others. He delights in sensuality. But his love is only passion and not real love. He loves his wife and children because he loves himself. If only his love is directed to God instead of to passing pleasures of a sensual life, he becomes blessed and pure.

Smarana

Smarana is remembrance of the Lord, His form, His glories. The mind gets rooted in the thoughts of God as inspired through the study of scriptures, hearing His glories and singing His Name, and does not think of the objects of the world that inspire sensual inclinations. There is concentration of mind as one thinks of the glories of God and His virtues. There is forgetfulness of the body itself and the devotee loses his likes and dislikes of the mundane nature, and his heart becomes filled with purity and divine love for all.

Remembrance of God alone can finally destroy all worldly impressions. Remembrance of God alone can turn the mind from sensual desires and objects. Remembrance of God makes the mind introvert and does not allow it to run into momentary elation, frustration and suffering. Smarana also means meditation on the spiritual values and the divine qualities that one must inculcate.

Padasevana

Padasevana is serving the Lord's feet. No one is fortunate to practise this method of Bhakti directly, for the Lord is not visible to the physical eye. But it is easily possible to serve the image of God in a temple, through ritualistic modes of worship or Puja Upachara, or better still serving the people selflessly, especially those who are in need of help. Padasevana is service of the sick and the poor and the distressed. Padasevana is service of humanity at large.

The whole universe is a manifestation of the Lord Service of the world is service of God, provided one has no axe to grind. Bharata served the Kingdom of Ayodhya in the name of the sandals of Sri Rama, with the greatest faith and devotion, while the elder brother was in exile. He kept them on the throne as symbols representing Sri Rama himself, and ruled in his name until his return. Similarly, one should perform one's duty, from discharging household responsibilities to administering the country through the highest office, as an instrument, a servant, of the Lord, which is possible only through perfect purity, understanding and self-discipline.

Archana

Archana is worship of the Lord such as with flowers and fruit. Worship can be done either to an image or a picture or even to a mental form. The image should be one appealing to the mind of the worshipper. The image is only a means or a symbol to identify God, so as to help the concentration of mind, but the important factor is a strong inner dedication. Archana is done through Bilva leaves or rice or vermilion powder or flowers, offered to the idol with the recitation of the various names associated with it.

The real purpose of Archana Is self-surrender, offering one's actions performed in the Name of God, offering of the flowers of virtues which the devotee cultivates to worship Him with. The object of any real worship is sincere devotion and self-surrender for the sake of merger in the Lord.

Vandana

Vandana is prayer and prostration. Humble prostration, touching the earth with the full length of one's body, with faith and reverence, before an image of God, helps the devotee to empty himself, cast off his ego and merge his will in the divine will. One should mentally offer prostration to all the creations of the Lord.

According to the Gita, the sky, air, fire, water, earth, stars, planets, directions, trees, rivers, seas and all living beings, constitute the body of God. The devotee should reduce himself to zero by mentally bowing before the entire creation in absolute devotion, thinking that he is bowing before God Himself.

Prayer is called Vandana, because it is a means of emptying oneself and attuning one's will with God's will. Divine will can flow into the vessel of the individual soul only when the latter is emptied of all impurities, superiority complex, base egotism, and cleansed with the purifying agent of devotion, faith and self-surrender.

Dasya

Dasya Bhakti is the love of God with sentiment as that of a servant to the Master. To serve the Lord and carry out His will, as perceived through a purified conscience, in the light of His virtues, mystery and glory, considering oneself as His slave, possessing the requisite qualification to serve Him, is Dasya Bhakti.

Serving and worshipping at the temple or church or mosque, serving the saints and the devotees of God, serving the poor and the sick, who are but manifestations of the same God, are also the forms of Dasya Bhakti.

To follow the teachings in the scriptures, to act according to the injunction of the Guru, to abide by the promptings of the pure conscience, are the forms of Dasya Bhakti. Everyone should serve the Lord with a pure heart and dedication, is the purport of Dasya Bhakti.

Sakhya

Sakhya Bhava is the cultivation of the sentiment of comradeship with the Lord. The inmates of the family of Nanda Gopa cultivated this kind of Bhakti. Arjuna cultivated this. To be always with the Lord, to treat Him as one's own dear relative or friend, to be in His company at all times, to love Him as one's own Self, is Sakhya Bhava.

When physical love is transformed into spiritual love.there is a transfiguration of the mundane into the divine. Thedevotee now is no longer a seeking aspirant but a highly advanced soul who treats every being of the world as his own relative or friend. There is no selfishness, no hatred, and nofeeling of separateness in him. All is God; God is all for Him.Sakhya Bhava cannot flourish in a weakling. It is found in thestrongest and the purest.

Atma-Nivedana

The ninth formofBhaktiiscalledAtma-Nivedana or self-surrender. The heart of the devotee who has taken refuge in the Lord, whoiswhollydevotedtoHim, gets purified, and he experiences the eternal bliss of the Divine. The devotee offershiseverythingtotheLord. He has no personal, independent existence by himself. He has given up his entire selfforGodandGodalone.

Godtakescareofhimandguides him to Himself. Grief and happiness, loss and gain, the devotee treats as gifts sent byGodandisnotswayedbythem. He considers himself an instrument in the hands of God.

Alltheseninemodesofdevotion are more or less interconnected. The devotee may have a tendency to any oneofthese,asperhistemperament, but has to acquire the main factors that are common to all the nine modes.Anyonewhohasachievedafullmeasure of success in any single mode will automatically be adequately qualifiedintheothermodes.Sincerity,faith, dedication, love of God and purity of outlook, constitute the basic factorsinalltheninemodesofdevotion.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORSHIP OF DEVI

The term 'Devi' is synonymous with Sakti or the Divine Power that manifests, sustains and transforms the universe, that which works as a unifying force of existence. In fact, worship of Devi or the Divine Mother is not sectarian; it does not belong to any cult, as it is commonly mistaken to be.

Devi is not merely what is set vis a vis to Vishnu or Siva, as the common Hindu understands. By Devi or Sakti we mean the presupposition of all forms of existential power-the power of knowledge, of sustenance, of omniscience. These powers are the glorious attributes of God, whatever be His name Vishnu or Siva or Allah or Jehovah.

In other words, Sakti is the very means of the Absolute's appearing as many, of God's causing this universe. God creates this world through Srishti Sakti, (creative power), sustains It through Sthiti Sakti (preservative power), and dissolves it through Samhara Sakti (dissolutive power). Sakti and Sakta(worshipper of Devi) are related as Mother and child, while the cosmic Power and the Originator of that Power are inseparable, i.e., God and Sakti being like fire and the heat of the fire.

Active Power

Devi worship or Sakti worship is, therefore, worship of God's glory, of His greatness and omnipotence. It is adoration of the Almighty. It is unfortunate that Devi is understood as a mere blood-thirsty Hindu Goddess. No, Devi is not the property of the Hindus alone. Devi does not belong to any religion. Devi is not differentiated from the Deva by the factor of gender.

Devi is the conscious Power of the Deva or God. Goddesses are the symbolic aspects of the same Power, and the different forms connected with the different names are concessions given to the limitations of human mind or comprehension, so that one is able to understand that Power.

Sri Krishna says in the Gita: "This is only my lower nature or Sakti (prowess in the worldly sense); beyond this is my higher nature, the original Sakti, the life principle, which sustains the entire universe." One of the Upanishads says: "TheParasakti or the Supreme Power of God is heard of in various ways, this power is the nature of God manifesting as knowledge, strength and activity."

Truly speaking, all beings of the universe are Sakti worshippers, for there is none who does not love and long for power, at least in its lower forms. Physicists have proved that everything is pure, imperishable energy. This energy is only a form of Divine Sakti which exists in every particle of existence.

Trinity

Sakti is conceived of in its manifestation, among others, as Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Kaali. These, as is evident, are not three distinct Devis but the one formless Devi, worshipped in three different forms, symbolising the creative, the preservative and the dissolutive aspects of the Reality, in one sense, as also enlightenment, material and spiritual enrichment, and destruction of evil traits and forces, in another sense

Sarasvati is cosmic intelligence, cosmic consciousness. Worship of Sarasvati is necessary for purification of intelligence, cultivation of right discernment and self-realisation. Lakshmi does not merely symbolise material wealth; all kinds of prosperity, magnificence, divine joy, nobility, auspiciousness and benevolence come through the grace of Lakshmi. Kaali does not kill any external demon but is worshipped in order that, through our self-effort and through her grace, the demons of our negative qualities may be destroyed.

Thus Devi worship to an aspiring soul means cultivation of knowledge and of virtues, and destruction of the lower nature. The ordinary man through the worship of Devi, endeavours to educate himself in the best

traditions of culture, look to his material well-being and acquire at the same time the wealth of virtues, and strive for conquering the animal qualitiesoflust, greed, hatred, anger and selfishness.

The worshipper of Devi isprimarily a spiritual aspirant, even though he might be a householder. Devi worship should not be a mechanicalritualism. It must be a process of inner unfoldment, and communion with God as Mother. It creates one of the mostbeautiful relationships of the individual soul with the cosmic Soul.

Chapter VI

THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE

THAT THOU ART

O friend! Why doest thou suffer? Thou hast neither birth, nor disease, nor death. Thou hast neither mind, nor ego. Thou hast neither gross body, nor subtle body. Thou hast neither Chitta, nor Prana. Thou art the eternal, unchanging, all-pervading Self. Feel this, and be free.

O friend! Why doest thou grieve? Thou hast neither name, nor form. Thou hast neither caste, nor age. Thou hast neither sex, nor Indriyas. Thou art neither bound, nor weak. Thou hast neither father, nor mother. Thou art ever free, eternal, immortal Soul. Realise this and be free.

Find out the inner Atman, which is bodiless and formless. Do not identify yourself with the outer Annamaya Kosha or the physical body. The gross physical body is like the shell of a coconut. The real man is the immortal Spirit which cannot be annihilated. Man, in essence, is imperishable. He is the silent witness of the three states, viz., Jagrat, Svapna and Sushupti (waking state, dreaming state and deep sleep state).

Avidya

Just as a rope in darkness is mistaken for the snake, a post for a man, so also this impure body is mistaken for the pure Self, through Avidya or ignorance. If you bring a lamp, the illusory 'snake in the rope' will disappear. Even so if you attain knowledge of the Self, the illusory identification with the body will vanish. The essential qualities of man are not actually transferred to the post, nor the essential qualities of the post are really transferred to man. Even so, consciousness does not depend on the body, and the attributes of the body such as decay and death, pleasure and pain, do not belong to the Self or consciousness.

If you have direct knowledge of the Supreme Self or Brahman through meditation, you will attain immortality. If you knowthe Self, you have gained the true end of life. You will be afraid of nothing, then.

Akshara

That Reality, which has neither beginning nor end is the imperishable Brahman (Akshara). Akshara only is unchanging, infinite, eternal, self-luminous, indivisible, pure, perfect, ever free and independent. Akshara is your immortal Soul.

The fields or bodies are different but the pervading Spirit in the field is one. Jivatmas (embodied souls) are diverse, but the Paramatma is one. Wherever there is mind, there are Prana, egotism, and Jiva-chaitanya or reflected intelligence, side by side. He who has the sense of duality (Dvaita Bhava), or non-identity with the Self, will be born again and again, and undergo suffering.

This delusion of duality (Bheda-Bhranti) can only be removed by the knowledge of the identity of Jiva and Brahman. "Aham Sukhi"-"I am happy," "Aham Duhkhi"-"I am miserable," "Aham Karta"-"I am the doer," "Aham Bhokta"-"I am the enjoyer," are a common experience of all human beings. Therefore, the Jivatma is a Samsarin and is subject to pleasure and pain, whereas the Paramatma is free from pleasure and pain. He is Asamsarin. He is eternally free. He is one.

Jivatma

If there is only one Jivatma in all bodies, all should have similar experiences at the same time. If 'A' suffers from abdominal colic, 'B' also should experience the pain at the same time. If 'A' experiences joy, 'B' also should have a similar experience. If 'A' is stung by a scorpion, 'B,' who is not stung by a scorpion, should also suffer from the pain.

But this is not the case. When 'A' suffers, 'B' rejoices. When 'A' is jubilant, 'B' is depressed. When 'A' suffers from the sting of a scorpion, 'B' is enjoying his breakfast. Jivatma, ultimately, is identical with Paramatma, but the fields are different, bodies are different, minds are different, Karmas are different, and Jivatmas or individual souls are different. But the Paramatma in all these fields or bodies is one.

The Self is not affected by pleasure and pain, virtue and vice. He is the silent witness only. Pleasure and pain are conditions of the mind. They are ascribed to the Self through Avidya or ignorance. The ignorant man only regards the physical body as the Self. He is swayed by the two currents of Raga-Dvesha (attachment and repulsion), does virtuous and vicious actions, and reaps the fruits of these actions, viz., pleasure and pain, and is born again and again. But the saint who knows that the Self is distinct from the body is not swayed by Raga-Dvesha. He identifies himself with the pure, eternal Brahman and is always happy and actionless, though apparently he performs actions actions primarily meant for the welfare of humanity.

False Perception

The disease of delusion which causes perception of what is contrary to truth, pertains to the perverted mind, but not to the man who perceives things in their true light. Even so, ignorance, doubt, pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, Raga-Dvesha, false perception, non-perception of truth, as well as their causes, belong to the instrument, mind, but not to the silent witness, the Self.

The wheel of Samsara or the world-process rotates on the hub of Avidya. It exists only for the ignorant man who perceives the world as it appears externally. There is no Samsara for a liberated sage. The blinkers cannot, in any way affect the sun. The breaking of the pot will not in any way affect the pot-ether. The water in the mirage cannot give moisture to the earth. Even so, Avidya and its effects cannot, in the least, affect the pure, subtle, attributeless, formless, partless, self-luminous Self. Avidya can do nothing to the Self. It belongs to the Jivatma, a composition of the five sheaths.

Avidya or ignorance born of Tamas acts as a veil and prevents man from knowing his essential Satchidananda, Brahmic nature. It causes perception of what is quite the contrary of truth, or causes doubt or non-perception of truth. As soon as knowledge of the Self dawns, Avidya vanishes in toto. Therefore, Avidya belongs to the mind, the ego, the intellect.

Liberation

In the state of liberation, wherein there is annihilation of the individual mind, there is no Avidya, there is no play of the two currents of Raga-Dvesha. If false perception, ignorance, pleasure, pain, doubt, bondage, delusion, sorrow, etc., were essential properties of the Self, just as heat is an essential property of fire, they cannot be got rid of at any time. But there have been many liberated sages such as Dattatreya and Jada Bharata, who possessed extraordinary, super-sensual or intuitive knowledge, who were free from false perception, doubt, fear, delusion, sorrow, etc. They were not bound by the Samsara, as they had perfect awareness of their own Svaroopa or essential Satchidananda, Brahmic nature.

The liberated sage, who is freed from selfishness, egotism, lust, anger and fear, roam about happily. He has shaken off everything. Avidya and its modifications cannot affect him. He is the Yati. He is the Sannyasin. He is the Yogin. He is the Paramahamsa. He is the Avadhuta. He is Brahman Himself. He is the Lord of lords. He is the Emperor of emperors. He is fit to be worshipped.

May His blessings be upon all! May you all attain liberation in this very birth!

THE PATH OF WISDOM

Jnana Yoga is the royal road that is described in the major treatises pertaining to and that which constitute the Vedanta. The point of starting is the hearing of the Vedanta or the Upanishads from a profound and sympathetic teacher. It includes not only the text but a very facile and convincing explanation thereof. Only after having acquired the basic qualifications, or the four means as indicated below, can the aspirant progress on the path of Wisdom or Jnana Yoga.

Four Means

The four means are discrimination (Viveka) dispassion (Vairagya); sixfold virtues (Shat-sampat); and burning desire for liberation (Mumukshutva). The aspirant must discriminate between the Real and the unreal, between the eternal and the transient, between the unchanging and the changing, between the subject and the object. He must have dispassion or indifference towards the enjoyment of material objects or to anything that is mundane and worldly in their intent. Dispassion must be the outcome of discrimination.

The sixfold virtues are tranquillity, self-restraint, power of endurance, satiety or desirelessness, faith and proper concentration. If the spiritual aspiration is lukewarm, then there will be no progress. If Vairagya is not steady and deep-rooted, there will be danger of failure. If self-restraint is not properly practised, the aspirant might ruin himself.

The identification of the Self with the body is the root cause of human sufferings. Do not identify yourself with this bundle of flesh, fat, bones, skin, blood and filth. The nature of the Self is Satchidananda (existence absolute, knowledge absolute, bliss absolute).

Although everything is transitory in the world, people want to amass wealth and run after name and fame, and seek eternal glory through identification of their name and form. Although there is persistent disillusionment, man wants to cling to his physical relationship with others. Although his body may be a victim of diseases, he never ceases to worship it.

Sat-Chit-Ananda

What varies not, nor changes in the midst of things that vary and change, is different from them. There the "I-consciousness" or the sense of being alive, which persists unchanged. Everybody has an innate feeling, "I exist."

Close your eyes and try to imagine for a moment that you are dead. You can never do so. You will be still watching the dead body of yours that is lying down. This clearly shows that you are always the silent witness or the subject, that you for ever exist (Sat).

There is an innate urge to know. No one likes to be rated as a fool. Even in an ignorant man there is an urge to know about what is going on around himself. He likes to hear gossips, and does not allow his mind to be at rest. This shows that there is an eternal quest for knowledge, and proves the presence of an intelligent principle in man (Chit).

Similar is the case with experience. There is always a desire to experience only what is pleasant, that which generates bliss, happiness. No one invites pain. No one enjoys pain. The urge to get away from suffering proves that one is ultimately related to a principle that is identical with bliss (Ananda). Man's real nature, therefore, is Sat-chit-ananda.

Living Experience

Vedanta is a living experience, a melting of the soul in the ocean of divine consciousness. It is neither mere theory nor dry philosophy. Mere theorising and lecturing are only intellectual gymnastics and lingual jitterbug. Vedanta teaches oneness or unity of Self. You must radiate love to one and all. The heart must expand. The mind must be

pure. Vanity must disappear. The ego mustwither. Selfishness must be eradicated. There should be no thought of the little self, no identification of one'swisdom with one's name and form.

The student of Vedanta orJnanaYoga must have a keen intellect to ratiocinate, analyse, discriminate, perceive through cogitation, reasonoutfrom cause to effect, and effect to cause. He should meditate thus: "I am the witness of the mental modificationsand the functions done by the different organs of the body. I am distinct from the body, senses, mind and thebreath.

I am the eternal self, abovepleasure and pain, likes and dis likes. The world is evanescent. I have no attachment to it, and am free fromallattractions for sensual objects."

The student of Jnana Yogathusmeditates on various such formulae, and gets himself rooted in their consciousness. It is not like daydreaming,but a living experience, which finds expression in his practical life, in little actions, tendencies and preferences.

THE VISION OF THE REALITY

It is the nature of man to seek happiness, because his essential nature is Ananda. No one likes pain, because it is not natural for man to be unhappy. He has the unique faculty of discrimination, which enables him to shape his aspirations and actions, and thus mould his destiny.

Life, however, is not a garden of roses. There is all-pervasive suffering, and no life is free from pain. It is because of the ignorance of man of his essential, divine nature. He thinks that it is natural for him to act like an animal, be selfish, and seek pleasure only through the avenues of the senses.

The senses by themselves are not to be blamed. It is the lack of man's self-discipline that makes them run amuck. Pleasure is the end of life to almost everyone. But if physical pleasure, availed through the senses from the objects of enjoyment, is to be the end of life, man must be prepared to pay the price of suffering.

Desire Is Ever Young

Desire is never satiated by pouring the oblation of enjoyment. Desire is ever young. It respects not old age or disease, but is forced to be thwarted by their sway. Desire is eternal in its urge, but, since it is always directed to finite sources, it can only reap limited results.

Desire, being insatiable, overtaxes the senses, and thus brings about pain. It overestimates the limitations of the human nature, and thus brings about frustration. It thinks that earthly relationship is eternal, and is disillusioned because of its transient nature.

All enjoyments come to an end, and so is the case with all relationships. Anything based on body must come to an end. If man seeks happiness from a limited source, then he can never be really happy. He has to change the angle of vision.

Soul Alone Is Real

Man must look for an unchangeable, infinite source, from which alone he can derive eternal happiness. That source can be only one, and it is his Soul, or the Self, the infinite essence that resides in all. He cannot seek it in the individual soul, which is a bundle of superimpositions-the mind, the ego, the sum total of actions. He can find the true nature of his Soul only by removing these superimpositions.

That Soul is identical with eternal bliss. The Soul alone is real. The removal of the superimpositions is the process through which man attains Self-realisation-at first through the knowledge of his little self, its limitations, its constituents, its likes and dislikes; then through the process of sublimation, he transmutes the baser elements in him into noble qualities, and one by one casts of all superimpositions, in order to realise finally, through intuitive knowledge, the real nature of the Soul that is within him.

Identity With Soul

Vedanta teaches man that he is identical with that Soul. He is not the body, not the mind, not the senses, not the ego, not the sumtotal of his actions-but the Atman, the cosmic Soul. Whatever that is apparent is illusory. Whatever that is visible is not real, ultimately. Whatever that one hears or feels is not the Reality.

The body is not the Soul, the mind is not the Soul, the chair is not the Soul, the table is not the Soul, the Soul is not this, and not that, and not anything that is known through the gross mind and senses. Through this process of negation man casts off his attachment to all material objects, and removes his earthly delusion. But this is only a process, not an end in itself.

The aspirant, through the means of discrimination such as “the body is not real but the spirit is real, and so the spirit must have supremacy over the flesh,” comes to know the nature of the Soul and attains the cosmic vision, when the world no longer appears to him as a conglomeration of material objects, but as the spirit itself,

Ignorance Leads to Bondage

The ignorance of this fact makes man run after sensual objects and fall into the mortal coils spread around him. He lives in the midst of darkness. He falls again and again under the sway ofdeath, and passes from one incarnation to another. He is deluded by the sensual pleasures of the world, even though they cause bondage, drag him into slavery and force him to undergo a good deal of suffering.

The world is not bad by itself. The objects of the world are not by themselves bad. It is man's slavery to worldliness and false perception that cause his misery. Vedanta helps him to correct his vision. The world, according to Vedanta, is unreal in comparison to the absolute reality of the Soul, but it is as much real as his body, and as long as he is attached to the body, he will also be attached to the world.

Attachment Leads to Slavery

Attachment to the world and slavery to the body and senses are caused by man's prime delusion. Attachment is nothing but a deep-rooted selfishness. You are attached to another because you love your little self. Only in the absence of selfish attachment can there be real love and true spirit of service. In the absence of attachment only can there be objective judgment or right discernment.

Vedanta, however, cautions man to take care that he does not become callous. In the name of non-attachment to others, he might as well become attached to himself, and lose his sense of responsibility. The process of negation is not negative in its intent but positive in its objective.

Man must know himself. That is the primary objective of Vedanta. Why does man run after the pleasures of the flesh, so as to seek happiness? Because he does not know himself. Why does man, in spite of knowing the transitory nature of the senses, run after worldly objects? Because his past worldly impressions force him to do so.

Right Discernment

Man must, therefore, cultivate right discernment, and discipline his mind, so as to be rooted in correct judgment and not allow himself to be led astray by his impulses. This can be done through strengthening of the will. The will can be strengthened only through the discipline of the senses.

Right discernment or discrimination, cogitation and evaluation of the nature of things, would give him dispassion. It is dispassion alone that can give man a glimpse of his real nature. Discrimination would give him a mental understanding of the fact, but dispassion will make him experience it.

Dispassion can be sustained only through the cultivation of mental equipoise and control of the senses, both of which are interrelated. You can see your image in the well when the water is not disturbed. You can see your face clearly in a mirror which has been well polished. The mind should be purified through concentration on the nature of the Soul, contemplation on it, sublimation of the lower impulses, and cultivation of positive qualities.

Man Must Know Himself

Man does not know himself because he is perpetually drowned in the sense-world. He must get over his self-wrought delusion through enquiry and meditation on the nature of the Reality. The study of the scriptures will give him a vision into it, and the guidance of the preceptor will clear his perception. Purification of the vehicle of perception will enable him to retain its consciousness.

It is a long process. But that is how you can free yourself from the sufferings of the world. The world is mind, and suffering is mostly in mind. It is only by shaping your mind to perceive the world in its true light and your real position in it, by knowing your inner nature, and disciplining yourself, that you can conquer the miseries of life.

Suffering derived through physical causes are much lesser than the magnitude of mental suffering. If the mind can be trained in the light of the nature of things, if it knows contentment, if it knows how to cultivate the strength of will and take the initiative to ameliorate one's physical and spiritual poverty. Then suffering in life can be, to a great extent diminished.

Maker of Destiny

Vedanta does not believe in fatalism. Man is the maker of his destiny. If you think that you are an animal, then animal you are. If you think that you are a worm crawling in the gutter of sensual filth, then a worm you are. If you think that you are an upright,honest and courageous man, then so you become. If you think that you are a man of principles and assiduously cultivate them, then they can never fail you.

If you think that you can be prosperous by dishonesty. then there is the law of retribution to give your due; you will know no peace in your life, if you follow a crooked path. If you think that you can be happy by causing suffering to others, then their suffering will take care of you, in due course. You can never escape the law of action and reaction. Thoughts shape your aptitudes, and aptitudes direct your actions. Actions cause reactions, and reactions are what is called destiny.

Conquest of Misery

You can dispel pain, sorrow and fear, ignorance, worry and anxiety, only when you realise your real nature. You can be happy only when you are steady in the consciousness that you are much more than this body and mind, that you can be above your environments, that you are the immortal spirit, who, knowing the limitations of life, perceives things in their own validity, and carries out one's duties with non-expectation, efficiency, detachment and responsibility.

You must realise your inner spiritual nature. There is no other way to attain freedom from ignorance, desires for material objects, fear, suffering and frustration. When you are, in truth, the immortal soul, how can you be subject to fear and frustration? When you are the blissful Atman, full of peace and poise, how can you be subject to restlessness, misery and anxiety?

Remedy the Cause

The state of affairs in your mundane life has been brought about by your ignorance and wrong actions. Take care of your actions, and life will take care of itself. Take care of your thoughts, aspirations, and actions will take care of themselves. Take care of today, and tomorrow will take care of itself.

The music of the Soul is within you. The Kingdom of God is within you. The domain of peace is within you. The Light of lights is within you. The highest knowledge is within you. Thebliss eternal is within you. The source of power, joy and life is within you.

Heaven and hell are within you. The fountain head of spiritual beauty is within you. A vast reservoir of positive potentiali. ties are within you. Turn the gaze from the sensual objects, and look within. There you will find the fulfilment of all your longings, aspirations, but never in this world of sensual duality.

Collect the dissipated rays of the mind and converge them on the ever-blissful, ever-pure Soul, within. Commune with the eternal spirit. Merge yourself in the self-effulgent reality. Plunge yourself in the ocean of bliss. The choking bondage of mind will loosen itself gradually. All doubts will clear, one by one. All suffering will ebb away. You will be blessed with the highest enlightenment.

Be Rooted in Consciousness

No bondage can stifle you. Whatever your circumstances and environments, keep yourself ever-rooted in this consciousness. Be always peaceful and happy. Abandon all anxiety, worry and apprehension. Be self-poised, self-contained, self-contented. Know that you are the glorious light of the eternal spirit. Stop all modifications. You are the serene ocean of spiritual consciousness.

You are like the musk-deer that ran after the fragrance of the musk. You are befooled by the notion that you are a miserable wretch, subject to all the travails of life. Assert your real nature to yourself. Tear asunder the veil of ignorance. Close the door of the vanity-ridden mind, shut the windows of the senses, retire into the chambers of your heart, and behold the glory of the immortal Atman.

Every moment of your life live in such a way as would befit your glorious perception of the Soul. Never swerve from the path of divine life; never lose the sight of the Soul within. Melt all barriers in the consciousness of this inner reality. Merge your self in the love of the all-pervading Atman. Feel its presence everywhere and in all beings.

THE BASIS OF VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

The basis of Vedanta philosophy is the oneness of the reality and the unity of life. The reality is self-luminous, self-contained, eternal and all-pervasive, and does not need for its support any other agency. In its ultimate principle, it is formless, nameless and timeless, spaceless, attributeless, endless and beginningless, but it manifests itself by way of the creative process, through matter.

Matter is unreal in the sense that it cannot maintain its validity without the support of the spirit, and is unstable and constantly changing. The spirit is immanent in all forms, animate and inanimate, and is the sustaining principle for everything. There is nothing called dead matter. All matter is energy. To perceive matter exclusively as a gross entity, without the Consciousness of the spirit behind, is illusion.

Reality Behind Phenomena

It is the ultimate reality which gives light to the sun, the stars,the fire, the intellect, the eyes. It is this reality which gives life tothe body, the senses, and all kinds of organism. It is this realitywhich maintains the equilibrium of the atomic structure of allmatter, and even though man might split the atom, he can dovery little for the disruption of the atomic structure of the universe.

This reality, in its manifesting principle, has three aspects the creative, the sustaining and the dissolutive. The cosmic vibration sets into action the condensation, diversification and constitution of material bodies, and though they might externally appear to be inert, they are sustained by the energy principle of the reality.

Evolutionary Process

This energy principle evolves organic matter into vegetable organism, into animal bodies, into human forms. This process of evolution is automatic until the individualised life principle, emerging from the animal strata, assumes a human form and is constituted as an individual soul with a mind to discern and shape its destiny in its successive transmigrations-finally to cast off its individuality, and,realise its identity with the cosmic Soul and merge therein.

Vedanta philosophy helps the process of this realisation. It teaches the identity of the individual soul with the cosmic Soul and proclaims that both are not different, but the same. Even though the ultimate reality is nameless, formless and attributeless, various qualities such as omnipresence, omniscience, eternally blissful by nature, and so on, are associated with it, in order that the individual soul might comprehend itself to be so, through an avenue, which is basically and unavoidably finite, the mind, the factor which is the cause of its individualised imprisonment, but also a means of its release.

Maya Doctrine

Maya is the veiling power of the reality, which makes matter appear as a self-sustaining entity, which it is not. It is Maya which deludes man to think that the body acts, the mind thinks, the eyes see, the ears hear, through their own agencies, without being aware of the fact that it is the Atman which makes all these instruments function.

Vedanta proclaims the victory of the spirit over matter. The doctrine of Maya is not pessimistic. It helps man to see things in their true nature. The son is dear to man because the Atman is dear to him. The wife is dear to man because the Atman is dear to him. Man loves another because, in truth, he loves himself.

The veiling power of Maya makes man associate everything with his little self-the mind, the ego, the body, instead of with his higher Self. By right understanding of the Maya doctrine, one comes to know the nature of the illusion, and identifies oneself with the reality. Maya disappears with the dawn of Self-knowledge.

Individual Soul

Life is one, but the same soul is individualised in millions of entities with as many superimpositions. The soul became individualised when the reality willed to begin the process of evolution in the fabric of creation, and when the human species was evolved, man was endowed with a discerning mind, to choose between what was good for him and what would subject him to the law of retribution. The original 'why' of the creation of the individual soul, as it embodied itself as man for the first time, can only be stated as the play of the reality.

There is no satisfactory explanation to this 'why. But once the soul became embodied as man, its fate lay in its own discretion. For the first time the responsibility of its evolution passed on into its own hands, in a relative sense, and it could thereafter either debase itself or elevate itself through its own actions and aspirations.

Vedanta shows the way of undoing this great imprisonment of the soul. It shows one how to remove the superimpositions of the body, mind, senses and the ego, actions and reactions, names and forms. Ultimately, the destiny of the individual soul is to merge back in its source. Vedanta hastens this destiny of man, and saves him a lot of suffering in the process of evolution, and even right now.

Practical Vedanta

Mere theorising of Vedantic principles is but day-dreaming. You must live in the spirit of Vedanta. You should become a practical Vedantin. The consciousness of the unity of life, the supremacy of matter over spirit, should find expression in your actions, in such a way that you would not differentiate between high and low, poor and rich; you would have balance of mind in loss and gain, pain and pleasure you would not be led astray by the urgings of the senses; you would think less of the body but more of the spirit; you would dissociate yourself from your little self.

It is the ignorance of the real nature of man that makes him selfish, that makes him infatuated with some and malicious to others, to run after the sense-world, and suffer the consequences. This ignorance Vedanta helps to remove.

CorrectUnderstanding

You should have a correct understandingofVedanta.Theworld is unreal in the sense that the consciousness of its ever-changing nature helps youtogetovertheswayofattachment and bondage, while not creating a frustration complex.The body is unreal inthesensethatyouareexpected to be free from selfishness, self-love and pet infatuations for a selected few,becauseyoucannotholdon to the body for ever. The mind is unreal in the sense that you are enabled to rise abovevanityandself-opinionated, false presumptions, and since it is an imperfect means of perception and limitedinitsscope.Thesensesare unreal in the sense that you are prevented from bringing suffering upon yourselfbytheirwronguse,andbecause they cannot give you real happiness.

There should be a clearunderstandingoftheMaya doctrine. A good deal of irresponsibility and foolishness can be avoided by thehalf-bakedVedanticstudent if only he would take the trouble of enlightening himself through the help of a worthyGuruandthroughhis own search for true knowledge. Above all, one should have a realistic understanding, asoundcommonsense,and a thoroughly practical outlook. Only then could Vedanta be harnessed to substantial benefit.

VEDANTIC PERSPECTIVE

Matter and soul are interrelated. The spirit willed to manifest itself, and thus matter was created. The spirit willed to see itself in many forms, and thus its sparks flew off in many directions to embody themselves in numerous forms. The spirit is the basis, and matter is a superimposition. The spirit is eternal, and matter is the changing phenomena.

This world of names and forms is constantly changing. Seas dry up and deserts come into being. Plateaus become seas, and towering mountains rise up from where there were seas. Elevations become depressions, and depressions become elevations. Green, pulsating trees turn into coal, and coal into ash and dust.

Changing Phenomena

Forests become model towns and agricultural farms, and cities turn into deserted ruins. Grains become blood, and blood becomes flesh. When flesh is dead, it decomposes and turns into worms, and new lives are created. A young man becomes an old decrepit, and a beautiful girl becomes an ugly woman. The robust youth becomes a doddering old man, and the slim girl becomes a fat woman. The rich man becomes a pauper, and a poor man becomes a millionaire.

Behind these ever-changing phenomena, there is the eternal, unchanging soul, which lives even when the body is no more, which is self-luminous, and is of the nature of blissful consciousness, even when the mind is distressed by the circumstances and deluded by the promptings of the senses. You must rise above the limited consciousness of the mind, body and senses, and identify yourself with the immortal soul within you.

Mind: A Means of Bondage and Release

The Karmas affect only the mind principle, which carries the individual soul with itself, but the soul is unaffected. The mind performs actions by itself and through the agencies of the body and the senses, and reaps their result, good or bad, but the soul is unaffected by these actions and their effects. You arenot the mind, body and senses. You are the soul. Therefore, grieve not.

The mind is the means of liberation as well as bondage. It you think that you are the mind and the body, you are bound. If you think that you are the soul, and the mind and the body are the instruments of your spiritual will, carrying out their respective Dharmas (righteous duties) in a spirit of detachment and on the path of truth, then you are not bound.

Naturally the mind runs towards the objects of the world, and associates itself with them. You have to turn the mind towards the inner soul through discriminative understanding. dispassion and practice (Viveka, Vairagya and Abhyasa), not because the objects of the world are bad, but for the purpose of freeing the mind from its slavery to them, to make yourself aware of the original source, and to have a correct perspective into the nature of things.

Change the Angle of Vision

Shake off the bonds of Karma through right knowledge and non-attachment. Know the secret of real happiness through concentration and meditation on the inner soul. Practise self-restraint. Discipline the mind and the senses through persistent effort and sublimation. Find the supreme peace within. Delight in the soul within.

You are constantly thinking of your body and the little self. Rise above worldly thoughts. There is something higher than the material objects, than the body and the senses. There is something nobler than physical gain, than sensual enjoyment. That is your spiritual consciousness.

You are the sun, the stars, the moon, the sky, the mountains, the ocean, the rivers. The whole world is your body. You are not a separate entity. Fill your mind with goodwill towards all. In the welfare of others is your

well-being. In the good of others is your happiness, in the peace of others is your delight. You are the immortal soul-beginningless and endless. Death, disease, sorrow, decay, gain or loss, cannot touch you. You are the all-pervading, fearless soul. Rest in this stupendous Consciousness, and let the mind and body function according to the law of Dharma, righteousness.

Practical Spiritual Life

Sublimate the urgings of the senses. Learn to discriminate between the right and wrong. Cleanse the dross of selfishness. Spiritual consciousness is a dynamic force. It is not confined to the prayer room or the church alone. It should be all-pervasive, guiding your every action, refining your manners, thoughts and urges.

Spirituality can never survive in the mental level. It must flower itself in practical life. Religion cannot be confined within the walls of the temple. It must find its expression in the relationship between one another. A religion that promotes separative consciousness, and a spiritual life that gives you a superiority-complex, fails to refine your manners and make you less self-centered, can only succeed in denying their purpose.

A religious man rushes into the prayer hall, pushing the people on the way without excusing himself. Is he really religious? He is as much a brute as a worldly man, because selfishness predominates even his religious urge to be in the prayer hall and blunts his manners. It is in the little actions of man that you know the extent of his spiritual development.

Selfishness Predominates Life

You find another religious man in the railway compartment, travelling with his family members to an Ashram. You find themselves sprawled out on the berth. They would refuse to make room for another man who might be standing by their side. They would be ready to fight for their comfort at the expense of others. In fact, you will find as many brutes among religious people as among worldly men, the difference being the latter are at least honest about themselves.

The Vedantic perspective enables you to correct the various forms of selfishness by the cultivation of universal Consciousness, which at first umbrates in the refinement of manners, consideration of others, and then in the purity of heart, and actual experience of the immanence of the spirit in all.

The Vedantin can be as much self-deluded as any other religious man, but such a person is only a lip-Vedantin, for the purpose of Vedanta is removal of delusion. The Vedantin is one who has conquered the enemy, ignorance, who is destitute of “I-ness” and “mineness,” who has rooted out pride, self-love, envy and hatred who rejoices in the ocean of spiritual Consciousness.

Names and Forms Are Not All

A cat made of rubber is a real cat for an infant. The rubber is non-existent for the baby, as the rubber is swallowed up by the baby’s awareness of the cat. The cat has concealed the rubber. For an adult, the rubber cat is only a mass of rubber. The rubber has swallowed up the cat. Even so, to a Vedantin, the spirit alone is real. The awareness of the spirit swallows up all forms of selfish identification with name and form. For a worldly man, the name and form are all that matter. The name and form swallow up the spirit.

The name and form are evident everywhere. That is as it should be. It is no use denying them, as you see them and feel them. They are not totally unreal, because they are existing, whatever the limitations of durability and so on. They are not real from a transcendental point of view, because they are impermanent and as they must perish sooner or later.

So also with material values. They have their spheres of necessity. Worldly relationships also have their utilitarian factors-in order to provide a cohesive structure to society. It is unrealistic to view them in the light of hell-fire, just as it is unrealistic to expect everybody to see God in all.

Role of Spiritual Values

The problems of life arise only when one gets lost in the meshes of worldly relationship and refuses to see anything beyond name and form. If you think that name and form are all, then you cannot escape from being deceived by them. If you think that worldly relationship is all, then you cannot escape suffering, because selfishness happens to be its predominant factor, and with the multiplicity of names and forms and the individuality of selfishness, mutual clash of self-interests is inevitable.

It Is here that spiritual values come into effective play. Individuality of interest should also take into consideration the general interest. Duty to oneself should be balanced by duty to larger interests. Association with individual name and form should not come in the way to make one's consciousness expansive. Matter should be subordinated to spirit-body to mind, and mind to soul. Consideration of selfish gain and easy profit should yield to the higher principles that make life worth living.

The mind being body-bound and matter-enveloped, it is easier to think in terms of names and forms. In fact, you always feel that you are the body, this is your friend and that is your enemy, this is your relation and that is a stranger, this is your countryman and that is a foreigner. You are so much attached to your name and form and their relationship to others that you find it extremely difficult to have a wider perspective.

Identification and Involution

If you lose some material object with which your name and form had been associated, you become dejected. If somebody else loses his possession, you do not feel anything because of the absence of identification. It is this identification that is at the root of suffering. Sentiments are good. Only a barren rock and a heartless animal can be devoid of sentiments. But they should not degenerate into self-pity.

If you lose a close relative, there is suffering. You suffer because of identification; others do not, because there is no identification. Suffering by itself is not bad. It is a great self-purificatory agent. But suffering should not degenerate into self-pity. It should not blind your vision that God has gathered the departed one unto Himself, into a better life, that the soul is immortal, and that it should take a better vehicle when the present one is unfit to be dwelt in, or when its allotted span comes to an end. Thereby you do not decry the name and form, but give them their due consideration, make them a pleasant memory, try to fulfil yourself the noble ideals with which they were associated, and rise above them in the consciousness of the immortal spirit.

The light is within you. Darkness is your mind's creation. The effulgent light that lends life and lustre to all is within you. The same light makes the sun, the stars and the moon shine, the trees grow, the flowers blossom. The scientists think, the poets and artists create images of grace and beauty. You must identify yourself with that light-not with the perishable body.

Your Real Nature

You are not a vehicle of suffering. You are not a helpless creature to be buffeted by the vagaries of destiny. You can shape your own future through right understanding and right effort. You are not the disease-ridden body, the weak and quivering mind. You are the inspiring brilliance of the dawn, the soft glow of sunset, the fragrance in flowers, the majesty of the snow-clad Himalayas, the vast expansiveness of the ocean Feel this; realise this. Let this consciousness serve as an antidote to the deep-rooted body-consciousness.

You are the peasant and the monarch. You toil with sweat in the field and factory. You are the Atma-samrat, the ‘self-knowing’ emperor. You are the saint and the sinner. You are the child and the father. You are the

seed and the fruit. You are the five elements individually, and their combinations. You are ugliness and beauty. You are merit and demerit. The whole universe is within you. Feel this; realise this. It is only through identification with all, you can get over self-centeredness, i.e., being limited only to a particular name and form. That is the purpose of Vedanta.

Brightness and darkness, birth and death, disease and decay, are relative conditions of the body and the material world. You are the soul, the perpetually self-luminous Consciousness. The body may die, but you continue to live. Never forget this truth.

WHO IS A REAL VEDANTIN?

The practice of Vedanta is a lifelong process. You cannot become a Vedantin just by imagination, or by merely reading a few texts. The path of Vedanta is like the razor's edge. It is only a great spiritual hero who can be a true Vedantin. Belief in the oneness of reality and unity of life is the primary principle. The reality is not only transcendent but immanent as the underlying consciousness behind all creations Matter is not merely matter, but energy. Energy is not merely energy, but consciousness. Life is not merely physical but spiritual.

The principles of Vedanta being generally universal In their outlook, are within the scope of the ideals of everyone. All may not be able to fructify the Vedantic ideals in their lives all at once, but everyone can aspire for them and realise them in lesser or greater extent. The goal is the same, and the spiritual aspirant's endeavour should be to attain it, be it through the paths of Karma Yoga, or Raja Yoga, or Bhakti Yoga, or Jnana Yoga, be it through Christianity, or Islam or Judaism, or any other religion. The following definitions give the striking characteristics of a real Vedantin. They are also the characteristics of a great devotee, or a Raja Yogin, or a Karma Yogin, or a Christian or an Islamic saint.

Universal Consciousness

1. He is called a real Vedantin who has a balanced mind, unselfish vision, and who beholds the one consciousness in all names and forms.
2. He is called a real Vedantin who has transcended the limitations related to physical consciousness, i.e., attachment to body and material objects.
3. He is called a real Vedantin who perceives equally the one spiritual consciousness that underlies all names and forms, and gives life to all living beings.
4. He is called a real Vedantin who is desireless, angerless, egoless, 'mineless,' selfless, and 'vanityless."
5. He is called a real Vedantin who is possessionless. Who has transcended the limited perspective conditioned by time, space and causation, and who abides peacefully in the purity of his heart.
6. He is called a real Vedantin who has transcended the blind conventions of society, and yet who does not break any code of conduct or law of society.
7. He is called a real Vedantin who knows that the Self alone is worthy of being aspired for and that alone is worthy of being perceived behind all names and forms.

Nature of a Vedantin

8. He is called a real Vedantin who is simple, gentle, humble, courageous, patient, self-restrained, ever peaceful, serene, forgiving, just, truthful and non-covetous.
9. He is called a real Vedantin whose heart is as broad as the sky, whose consciousness is as deep as the ocean, whose manners are as fragrant as roses, whose heart is as pure as the Himalayan snow, and whose intellect is as brilliant as theSun.
10. He is called a real Vedantin who is free from all forms of untruth, crookedness, cunningness, secret dealings, hypocrisy, harshness and double-dealing.
11. He is called a real Vedantin who is benevolent, kind, compassionate, merciful and loving towards all beings.
12. He is called a real Vedantin who is free from infatuated likes and dislikes, and who is endowed with dispassion, discrimination and right endeavour. Ermal ons can
13. He is called a real Vedantin who does not shun action but is engaged in the amelioration of the suffering of mankind, in a detached spirit.

Above All Distinctions

14. He is called a real Vedantin who is free from distinctions, differences, and who is above caste, creed, colour, race and religion.

15. He is called a real Vedantin who is ever ready to clear the doubts of aspirants, who is an ocean of divine wisdom and who is noble and magnanimous.
16. He is called a real Vedantin who practises the highest Yoga of equanimity and 'inaction' in action, who has internally renounced everything, but appears to be active externally, and who has abandoned everything as exclusive possession, but has embraced the whole world as his own.
17. He is called a real Vedantin who is not bound by the mundane requirements of life, but who is always moral and who does not disturb the harmony of society.
18. He is called a real Vedantin who is happy in all conditions of life, who lives peacefully in any place, and who eats any food from anybody's hands.
19. He is called a real Vedantin who realises that he is the pure consciousness which no amount of impurity can tarnish, who is related to no single individual exclusively, but is one with all.

Master of Himself

20. He is called a real Vedantin who is above sex-idea and sex-distinction, and who has no thought of tomorrow.
21. He is called a real Vedantin who has conquered all forms of passions, and who is not affected by praise or blame.
22. He is called a real Vedantin who, through the knowledge of the Self, realises that the one appears as many, like the one moon reflected in various receptacles of water.
23. He is called a real Vedantin who never asks anything for himself, who does not seek comfort or glory, who is always abstemious, disciplined, ever contented, and free from exhilaration and lackadaisic deflation.
24. He is called a real Vedantin who calls nothing his own, does not condemn others, but is ever intent to see the good in all.
25. He is called a real Vedantin who has realised that there is neither bondage nor liberation, neither sorrow nor mundane happiness, neither loss nor gain, neither having been nor becoming.

Free From Worldliness

26. He is called a real Vedantin in whom the lower nature is conspicuous by its absence, and who never betrays any trace of worldliness.
27. He is called a real Vedantin who respects all saints, all prophets, all religions, all faiths, all races, all countries; to whom no one is a stranger, no religion is alien.
28. He is called a real Vedantin who is the master of his destiny, who is not bound by any Karma, who reaps the results of his past actions as an inert entity, without being affected by them, whose present actions do not bind him.
29. He is called a real Vedantin who is a man of profoundunderstanding, not only in spiritual matters, but in the mundaneaffairs of the world.
30. He is called a real Vedantin who regards the world as a transitory manifestation of the Reality, and, therefore, is neither attached nor inconsiderate to it.

Chapter Seven

THE YOGA OF PSYCHO-PHYSICAL CULTURE

Yoga Exercises

Yogic Culture is divided into eight Angas (limbs or steps), viz. Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. Yama is the practice of Ahimsa (non-killing or non-injuring), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing). Brahmacharya (celibacy). Aparigraha (abstinence from greed). Niyama is the practice of Saucha (internal and external purity), Santosha (contentment), Tapas (mortification). Svadhyaya (study of scriptures). Isvarapranidhana (self-surrender). Asana is the third stage. If you want to enjoy the full spiritual benefits of Asanas, you must first practise well the first two steps, Yama and Niyama.

Asanas can be divided into two broad divisions, viz., meditative poses and poses for health and strength. According to Yoga Sastras there are four excellent meditative poses: Padmasana, Siddhasana, Svastikasana and Sukhasana.

Meditative Poses

Without securing a steady Asana, you cannot get on well in meditation. The more steady you are in your Asana, the more you will be able to concentrate and make your mind one-pointed.

Select any one of the four that is suitable to you and sit for fifteen minutes and gradually increase the period to three hours. When you sit in the Asana, keep the head, neck and trunk in one straight line. Do not bend the back.

When you sit for meditation in the Asana, close your eyes and gently concentrate on Trikuti (the space between the two eyebrows). Tip of the nose, Anahata Chakra (the lotus of the heart) are other places for concentration.

This is one of the most important poses. When Padmasana is demonstrated, it gives the appearance of a lotus. In Sanskrit Padma means lotus. The two feet on the opposite thighs represent the petals of a lotus.

Amongst the four poses prescribed for meditation, Padmasana comes foremost. It is the best Asana for contemplation. Rishis like Gheranda, Sandilya and others speak very highly of this vital Asana. It is suitable for householders, men and women.

These four Asanas, viz., Padmasana, Siddhasana, Svastikasana and Sukhasana, are practised for Japa and meditation. In your meditation room, in front of the picture of your Ishta Devata or Guru, spread a Kusa seat (seat made of Kusa grass) and over this a deer or tiger skin. You can spread a piece of cotton cloth on this deer or tiger skin and then sit for meditation. Or spread on the ground a fourfolded blanket and over this a cloth. This also will serve you well.

1. Padmasana

Sit on this seat and stretch the legs forward. Take hold of the right foot with the two hands, folding the leg at the knee, place the foot on the left thigh. Similarly fold the left leg and place it on the right thigh. Keep the body erect and place the hands between the heels, one over the other. If this is not suitable to you, you can keep the hands on the knees. The left knee or thigh should not be raised from the ground.

These meditative poses are highly suitable for Japa and contemplative purposes. They increase the digestive fire and give good appetite, health and happiness. They remove rheumatism. They keep the wind, bile and phlegm in proper proportions. They purify and strengthen the nerves of the legs and thighs. They are suitable for keeping up Brahmacharya (celibacy).

2. Siddhasana

"Siddha" means an adept in Sanskrit. Since great adepts used this Asana, it bears the name Siddhasana. Siddhas (perfected Yogins) speak very highly of this Asana. Young Brahmacharins and those who attempt to get established in celibacy should practisethis Asana.

Sit on your seat. Stretch the legs forward. Bend the left leg at the knee and place the heel at the soft portion of the perineum, the space between the anus and the scrotum. Then fold the right leg and place the heel against the pubic bone or just above the genitals. The genitals should be nicely arranged in such a manner that no pressure is felt. Keep the body erect and place the hands as in Padmasana.

3. Svastikasana

"Svastika" means 'prosperous' in Sanskrit. This Asana brings prosperity and success to the practitioner. Hence this pose bears the name Svastikasana.

Sit on the seat. Stretch the legs. Bend the right leg at the knee and keep the heel against the groin of the left thigh so that the sole will be lying in close touch with the thigh. Similarly bend the left leg and set it against the right groin. Insert the toes of the left leg between the right calf and thigh muscles. Now you will find the two feet between the calf and thigh muscles. This is very comfortable for meditation. Keep the hands as instructed in Padmasana.

4. Sukhasana

An easy, comfortable sitting posture for Japa and meditation is Sukhasana, the important point being the head, neck and the trunk should be in a line without any curve.

5. Vajrasana

Kneel down. Sit on the heels. Spineerect.

POSTURES FOR HEALTH AND CURE

Sirshasana

In Sanskrit ‘Sirsha’ means head. As you have to stand in this Asana on your head in a topsy-turvy manner, it is called Sirshasana. The practitioner gets the maximum physical and spiritual benefits through this Asana. So this is the most important one. This is the king of all Asanas.

Technique

The skull has to bear the whole weight of the body in this Asana. You should use a soft cushion or a fourfolded blanket. Spread the blanket on the ground. Sit on the knees. By interweaving the fingers make a finger-lock and keep it on the car. pet in such a way that the locked hands serve as a vertex and the two elbows as the base enabling the forearms to balance the body. The top of the head may be supported from behind by the finger-lock while doing this Asana.

Then keep the top of your head on the carpet close to the finger-lock. The parietal (frontal) portion of the top of the head should be placed on the carpet and not the portion nearer to the forehead. This will help you to keep the spine erect in this Asana. If the portion nearer to the forehead is used, the spine will suffer a curvature in balancing the whole body.

Now the knees are brought close to the body and the toes allowed to touch the ground for balancing. When the trunk is sufficiently thrown back you can slowly remove the toes from the ground. Slowly raise the legs high up in the air till the whole body becomes erect. Stand in the Asana for five seconds only and gradually increase the period to 15 minutes. In well-regulated systematic Asana exercises, even five minutes will be quite sufficient to derive the maximum benefits.

Always breathe through the nose only and never through the mouth. In the beginning for a few days you will find difficulty in breathing through the nose. In a few days, this trouble will pass away.

In learning the Asana in the above manner, you will not require any help. You yourself can learn the method of balancing by repeated attempts. Instead of a finger-lock method, you can keep the palms of your hands on the ground one on each side. You will find this quite easy. When you have learnt to balance the whole body you can take to the finger-lock method. Or you can take the help of a wall. Try to remove the legs from the wall. Or you may ask a friend to support the legs and to leave you when you have learnt how to balance yourself.

Bring the legs slowly to the ground to the original position. Lower the legs very, very slowly and avoid jerks. After completing the Asana stand erect for a minute or two. This will harmonise the circulation of blood.

Benefits

In this pose the whole body is inverted. Owing to gravitation. the arch of the aorta, the common carotids, the innominate andthe subclavian are flooded with rich arterial blood and in this Asana alone can the brain draw a rich supply of pure blood The importance of the brain, the root of all nerves, can be very well understood from the Chapter on "Brain and Nerves." The 12 pairs of cranial nerves, the spinal cord, the 31 pairs of the spinal nerves and the sympathetic system get sufficient nourishment. All the defects of the nerves, eyes, nose, throat and ears are completely removed by the practice of this Asana. It is a powerful nervine tonic. The whole nervous system is nourished and toned. All the venous blood that has to rise against gravity is now helped by the force of gravity and so the veins and their valves get ample rest. So this Asana will serve as a cure for varicose-veins.

This is extremely useful in keeping up Brahmacharya. The seminal energy is transmuted into Ojas Sakti. This is called sex-sublimation. Persons suffering from wet dreams or spermatorrhoea will derive very great benefit

from this Asana. The seminal energy is converted into Ojas Sakti and flows towards the brain so that it may be stored up as a spiritual force which may be used for a contemplative purpose, Dhyana

Sirshasana invigorates, energises and vivifies. It is a panacea (cure-all) for all human ailments. It is a powerful blood-purifier. It cures all the diseases of the liver, spleen, lungs and the genito-urinary system. It cures renal colic, deafness, diabetes, piles, pyorrhoea and constipation. The digestive power will improve. This Asana is best suited for ladies also. Many uterine and ovarian diseases are cured. It is not advisable for ladies to practise this Asana during the monthly periods and pregnancy. Sterility disappears. Memory improves admirably. Lawyers, occultists and thinkers will find it extremely useful. If you observe the breath, you will notice that it becomes finer and finer. This Asana leads to natural Pranayama and helps in awakening Kundalini Sakti that lies dormant in the Muladhara Chakra or basal Lotus.

Sarvangasana

"Sarvanga" means 'all parts'. So the very name suggests that this pose is concerned with all the parts of the body. It is one of the unique poses which rejuvenates the whole system.

Technique

Spread a thick blanket on the ground. Lie quite flat on the back Slowly raise the legs. Lift the trunk, hips and legs quite vertical. Rest the elbows on the ground firmly and support the back with the two hands. Raise the legs till they become quite vertical Press the chin against the chest. This is the chin-lock. While you perform this Asana the back of the neck, the posterior part of the head and the shoulders should touch the ground. Breathe slowly and concentrate on the thyroid glands which are situated in the neck. Do not allow the body to shake to and fro. When the Asana is over, lower the legs very slowly and with elegance. Avoid jerks. Do the Asana very gracefully. In this Asana the whole weight of the body is thrown on the shoulders. You can do this Asana twice daily, morning and evening. Immediately after performing this Asana you will have to do Matsyasana to derive the full benefit from it. Remain in this Asana for two minutes and gradually increase the period to 30 minutes.

Benefits

Just as Sirshasana is intended to tone up the whole nervous system, this easy and wonderful Asana is intended to promote the secretion of the thyroids and through it the whole body and all its functions. The thyroids are the most important glands of the endocrine system. In this Asana the thyroid glands receive a rich supply of blood. Healthy thyroids mean healthy functioning of the circulatory, respiratory, alimentary and genito-urinary systems of the body.

This Asana is a good substitute for modern thyroid treatment. It cures the dreadful leprosy. The patient will have to live on milk during the whole period of treatment. Milk helps the thyroid to secret its juice in sufficient quantity to help the economy of nature in its restorative function and regeneration. If the patient takes a sun-bath morning and evening, his recovery will be hastened.

This Asana keeps back the ravages of old age and keeps a man young always. Those young men who have prematurely lost their youth owing to bad habits like masturbation, sexual excess etc., will regain their vigour by this Asana. They cancombine Uddiyana Bandha and Nauli Kriya and regain their lost vitality and energy.

Sarvangasana cures dyspepsia, constipation, appendicitis, other gastro-intestinal disorders and varicose-veins. It supplies a large quantity of blood to the spinal roots of the nerves. It is this Asana which centralises the blood in the spinal column and nourishes it beneficially. Except through this Asana, the nerve roots cannot receive an adequate blood supply. It keeps the spine quite elastic. Elasticity of the spine means everlasting youth. It prevents the bones from early ossification (hardening). Sarvangasana awakens Kundalini and augments the digestive power.

Matsyasana

In Sanskrit "Matsya" means a fish. A person can float on water without swimming for a long time like a fish.

Technique

Spread a blanket on the ground and sit on it with the legsstretched. Bend the right leg and place the heel on the lefthip-joint. Again bend the left leg and place the heel on the righthip-joint. This is Padmasana or foot-lock.

Then lie on the back. The Padmasana should not be raised from the ground. Rest the elbows or hands on the ground. Now lift the trunk and head. Rest the top of the head on the ground by bending the back well and throwing the neck well behind. Then catch hold of the toes. This is Matsyasana. It is performed immediately after Sarvangasana. Remain in this Asana for 2 or 3 minutes.

Those fatty persons who find it difficult to form a foot-lock, may simply bend the legs at the knees and so practise it.

Benefits

This Asana relieves the cramp and stiffness in the neck caused by Sarvangasana. Matsyasana naturally massages the congested parts of the neck and shoulders. In Sarvangasana the neck is bent well forwards whereas in Matsyasana the neck is bent backwards.

In Matsyasana also the thyroids and parathyroids receive plenty of blood. The waist, the back and the neck will grow strong. In this Asana the practitioner can breathe freely and deeply, as the larynx or wind box and trachea or windpipe are thrown open widely. The apices of the lungs which are located just behind and above the clavicular bone or collar-bone in common parlance, receive a proper amount of fresh air and a sufficient supply of pure oxygen. The cervical and upper dorsal nerves are nourished with a good quantity of blood and so toned up properly. The endocrine glands, and the pituitary and pineal glands that are located in the brain are also stimulated and toned up. These glands play a vital part in the physiological functioning of the various systems of the body. In this pose the abdominal muscles are exercised. So this Asana removes constipation and massages the abdominal viscera or organs.

Halasana

On completion this pose gives the exact appearance of a plough. 'Hala' means a plough.

Technique

Lie flat on your back on a carpet. Keep the two hands near thethighs, the palms towards the ground. Without bending thelegs, slowly raise them higher up. Do not raise the hands butraise the hips and the lumbar part of the back also and bringdown the legs till the toes touch the ground beyond the head.Keep the knees quite straight and close together. The legs andthighs must be in one straight line. Press the chin against thechest. Breathe slowly through the nose. This is Halasana. Remain in this Asana for two minutes. Then slowly raise the legsand bring them to the original position of lying on the groundflat.

There is a better variety of this Asana. When the toes reach the ground, remove the hands and catch hold of the toes. The pose can be repeated 3 to 6 times with advantage. For attaining spiritual benefits, the pose should be maintained for a long time at a stretch.

Benefits

In Bhujanga, Salabha and Dhanurasana the deep and superficial muscles of the back are contracted and relaxed, but in Halasana these muscles are fully stretched and relaxed. These muscles of the back are responsible for the healthy condition of the spine. The abdominal muscles contract vigorously and become very strong. The whole

spine is steadily pulled posteriorly. Every vertebra and ligament that is attached to it receive plenty of blood and become healthy. All the 31 pairs of spinal nerves and the sympathetic system are well nourished by a copious blood supply and so are toned up. This Asana prevents the early ossification of the vertebral bones. He who practises this Asana is very nimble, agile and full of energy. Various sorts of myalgia, lumbago, sprain in the neck, neuralgia, etc., are cured. Obesity or corpulence and habitual or chronic constipation, gulma (chronic dyspepsia), liver and spleen complaints are also cured.

Paschimottanasana

Lie flat on the back (supine) on the carpet. Keep the legs and thighs fixed to the ground. Stiffen your body. Slowly raise the head and chest and assume a sitting pose. Now exhale and bend yourself further till you are able to catch hold of your toes. You may even bury your face between the knees. Remain thus for 5 seconds and then slowly raise the body and resume the supine position. You should now inhale. Repeat this Asana 3 or 4 times.

Benefits

This is an excellent Asana. It makes the breath flow through the Brahma Nadi or Sushumna Nadi and rouses the gastric fire. All the abdominal muscles get vigorously contracted. This is a powerful abdominal exercise. This Asana stimulates the abdominal viscera such as the kidneys, liver, pancreas. It cures piles and diabetes. This Asana is a good preventive of nocturnal emissions. It is a very good Asana for stretching the posterior muscles of the body. The hamstring muscles at the back of the knees are strengthened. The epigastric nerves, the bladder, the prostrate, the lumbar nerves and the sympathetic are all toned up and kept in a sound condition. The spine becomeselastic and thereby perennial youth is established. Halasana and Paschimottanasana bend the spine anteriorly in a perfect manner.

Bhujangasana

When this Asana is fully done, it gives the appearance of a hooded cobra. The raised trunk, neck and head, represent the hood. Hence the significant name.

Technique

Lie down on the blanket face downwards. Relax all the muscles completely. Place the palms below the corresponding shoulders on the blanket. Raise the head and upper portion of the body slowly just as the cobra raises its hood. Bend the spine well. Do not raise the body suddenly with a jerk. Raise it little by little so that you can actually feel the bending of the vertebrae one by one and the pressure travelling downwards from the cervical, dorsal and lumbar regions and lastly to the sacral regions. Let the body from the navel downwards to the toes touch the ground. Retain the posture for a minute and slowly bring down the head little by little. You may repeat the process 6 times.

Benefits

All the Western physical culturists unanimously acclaim the importance of rendering the spine supple and elastic. Elasticity of the spine means health, vitality and youth to the individual. The deep and superficial muscles of the back are well toned up. This pose relieves the pain of the back that may have been caused by overwork. The abdominal muscles are pulled and thereby strengthened. The intra-abdominal pressure is increased to a very high degree and so constipation is removed. All the abdominal viscera are toned up. Every vertebra and its ligaments are pulled backwards and they get a rich blood-supply. It increases bodily heat and destroys a host of ailments. It gives good appetite.

Bhujangasana is particularly useful for ladies in toning up their ovaries and uterus. It is a powerful tonic. It will relieve amenorrhoea, dysmenorrhoea, leucorrhoea and various other utero-ovarinetroubles

Salabhasana

"Salabha" means a locust in Sanskrit. When the pose is demonstrated, it gives the appearance of a locust with its tail raised.

Technique

Lie prone (on the face) on the blanket and keep the hands alongside the body, palms facing upwards. Rest the chin on the ground by raising the head a little higher up or rest the chin, the mouth and the nose on the ground. Now inhale slowly. Stiffen the whole body and raise the legs high. The knees should be kept straight. The sacrum too should be raised a little along with the legs. Now the chest and the hands will feel the burden of the legs. Keep the thighs, legs and toes in a straight line. Remain in the pose for 20 seconds and slowly bring down the legs, and then exhale slowly. Repeat the process 3 or 4 times according to your capacity. Do not go so far as to induce fatigue. Bhujangasana exercises the upper part of the body and Salabhasana the lower extremity of the body.

Benefits

The intra-abdominal pressure is increased to a very high degree. It relieves constipation and tones up the liver, pancreas and kidneys. All the abdominal muscles are strengthened to a very great degree. The vertebrae of the lumbar and the sacrum bone also get toned up. The sacral, coccygeal and the lower part of the lumbar regions receive plenty of blood and so become healthy and strong. Owing to the Kumbhaka done during this pose, the lungs expand and become strong.

Dhanurasana

When this Asana is performed, it gives the appearance of a bow. 'Dhanur' means a bow. The stretched hands and legs represent the string of a bow; and the body and the thighs represent the bow proper.

Technique

Lie prone on the blanket. Relax the muscles. Now bend the legs over the thighs. Catch hold of the right ankle with the right hand and the left ankle with the left hand firmly. Raise the head, body and the knees by tugging at the legs with the hands sothat the whole burden of the body rests on the abdomen and the spine is nicely arched backwards like a bow.

Maintain the pose for a few seconds and then relax the body. You can either make a retention or breath normally. Even weak persons can do this Asana easily. To perform the Asana a sudden movement of the body is to be avoided. Be steady. Do not jerk the body.

Dhanurasana complements or supplements Bhujangasana. We can say it is a combination of Bhujanga and Salabha Asanas with the addition of catching the ankles. Bhujanga, Salabha and Dhanur Asanas form a valuable combination. They always go together. They form one set of Asanas. Dhanurasana should be repeated 3 to 4 times.

Benefits

The very appearance of the pose gives one the idea that it is a combination of Bhujangasana and Salabhasana. All the benefits of Salabha and Bhujanga Asanas can be derived to a greater degree in Dhanurasana. The back muscles are well massaged. This removes constipation and cures dyspepsia, rheumatism and gastrointestinal disorders. It reduces fat, energises digestion, invigorates appetite and relieves congestion of the blood in the abdominal viscera. This Asana is highly suitable for ladies.

Ardha-Matsyendrasana

"Ardha" means half. This is half of Matsyendrasana. This Asana takes its name from the Rishi or Yogi Matsyendra, who first taught this Asana to the students of Hatha Yoga.

Technique

Spread a blanket on the ground and sit on it with the legs stretched out. Bend the right leg at the knee and set the heel against the perineum. Do not allow the heel to move from this space. Now bend the left leg at the knee and with the help of the hands, arrange the foot to rest on the ground by the external side of the thigh. Then passing the right hand over the left knee, catch hold of the left foot firmly by the right hand. The left knee is now placed at the right axilla. In order to have more mechanical advantage for twisting the spine the left hand is now swungback and the right thigh is caught. Now steadily pull and twist the spine. To help the spine to twist evenly all through, the neck too is turned towards the left shoulder. Keep the chest erect and forwards. Remain in this pose for 5 seconds. Then release the hands and legs. Repeat the same process, twisting the spine on the right side by changing the limbs, thus accomplishing the twist on both sides. This will complete the whole spinal twist.

Benefits

Ardha-matsyendrasana keeps the spine elastic and well massages the abdominal organs. Lumbago and all sorts of muscular rheumatism of the back muscles are cured. The spinal nerve-roots and the sympathetic system are toned up. They draw a good supply of blood. This is a very good Asana for constipation and dyspepsia. In this Asana every vertebra is rotated on both sides. The ligaments too that are attached to the vertebra get this movement and so receive a rich supply of blood. All the spinal nerves are toned up. The Asana gives lateral movement to the spine to a great extent.

Mayurasana

In Sanskrit 'Mayur' means peacock. When this Asana is exhibited the body resembles a peacock which has spread out its bundle of feathers at the back.

Technique

Kneel on a blanket. Join the two arms together and rest them on the ground, palms turned down. You may curve the fingers slightly. This facilitates balancing. Keep the hands firm. Now you have steady and firm forearms for supporting the whole body. Bring down the abdomen slowly against the conjoined elbows. Support your body on your elbows. Then stretch your legs. Inhale and raise the legs together from the ground. Raise the legs straight on a level with the head, parallel to the ground. Keep the posture steady for 5 seconds and then rest the toes on the ground and exhale. This is Mayurasana. Rest for a few minutes.

Benefits

This is the best Asana known for all stomach disorders. Owing to the pressure of hands on the stomach below the navel, the abdominal aorta is partially compressed and the blood that is thus checked is directed towards the digestive organs. The liver, pancreas, stomach, kidneys are toned up. The intra-abdominal pressure is increased to a very high degree and the abdominal viscera is toned up. Mayurasana awakens the Kundalini Sakti.

Mayurasana has got a charm of its own. It braces you up quickly. It serves like a hypodermic injection of adrenaline or digitalin. This is a wonderful Asana for improving digestion. Sluggishness of the liver or hepatic torpidity disappears. This one Asana can give you maximum benefit in a minimum space of time; a few seconds daily are enough.

Padahastasana

This can be styled as 'Standing Paschimottanasana'. In Sanskrit 'Pada' means 'feet' and 'Hastha' means 'hands'.

Technique

Stand erect. Raise your hands over your head and inhale deeply. Then exhale slowly and while exhaling bend the body till the hands reach the toes and the nose touches the knees. The raised hands should be in contact with the ears all throughout, even while bending the body. After a little practice you will be able to bury the face between the knees and keep the palms firmly on the ground. Remain in this pose for 5 seconds. Then slowly raise your body and come to the standing position. When you raise your body, you should inhale slowly. Repeat this pose 4 times.

Benefits

All the benefits of Paschimottanasana are derived from this Asana. The spine becomes supple and is lengthened. It is also an excellent exercise for increasing your height. The adipose tissue on the abdomen will disappear. This Asana is very suitable for ladies for reducing any excess of fat and for developing a graceful figure. You will feel much invigorated after performing this Asana. The body will be rendered light.

Trikonasana

'Trikona' means triangle. Since this Asana when demonstrated gives the appearance of a triangle, it bears the name Trikonasana.

Technique

Stand erect keeping the feet two or three feet apart. Now stretch your arms wide on the sides in a line with the shoulders. The palms should fall downward. Bend to the left slowly and touch the left toes with your left hand. Remain thus for 5 seconds and slowly return to your standing position. Do not bend your legs or hands when you bend down or when you get up. From the standing position bend to your right next and touch your right toes with the right hand. Remain for 5 seconds in this position and then come back to your original standing position. Repeat thus 4 times. This is Trikonasana.

Benefits

Trikonasana tones up the spinal nerves and the abdominal organs, increases peristalsis of the bowels and invigorates the appetite. Constipation is relieved. The body becomes light. Those who suffer from a shortening of the legs due to a fracture of the hip or thigh bone or bones of the leg will be benefited by this Asana. The trunk muscles are contracted and relaxed and stretched. The spine is bent laterally on both sides and the muscles are fully stretched. This Asana keeps the spine very elastic.

Yoga Mudra

Sit on a blanket. Form a foot-lock (Padmasana) by placing the right foot over the left thigh and the left foot over the right thigh. Slowly bend forward and touch the ground with the forehead. Take your hands to the back and catch hold of the right hand wrist by the left hand. As you bend down, exhale slowly. Remain in this pose for 10 seconds and then assume the original sitting posture and inhale slowly. Repeat the Mudra six times. This is very useful for rousing the Kundalini Sakti. This pose removes all kinds of disorders of the abdominal viscera.

Chakrasana

Lie down. Bend the hands and legs. Raise the body resting on the hands and legs.

Savasana

'Sava' means 'dead body'. When one performs this Asana it gives the appearance of a dead body So it is named Savasana. This is a closing pose. You should do this after doing every other exercise for relaxation.

Technique

Spread a soft blanket and lie supine (on the back). Keep the hands on the ground by the sides. Let the legs be straight. Keep the heels together and the toes separated. Now relax all the muscles of the body. Breathe slowly and rhythmically. Give up planning and scheming. Keep your eyes closed. Relax all the muscles, the nerves and the organs. Start the relaxation process from the toes upwards. Then proceed to the calf muscles, gastronemius, soleus and plantaris muscles, muscles of the neck, face, etc. Decide on a system. See that the abdominal organs, the heart, chest and the brain are also relaxed. Do not sleep. In this pose you will enjoy perfect peace, ease, comfort and relaxation.

Benefits

The pleasant and exhilarating feelingcan only be realised by those who can successfully perform this Asana. Words cannot adequately describe the peacewhich the practitioner enjoys. Every one of you should enjoy it. If you are tired from hard work, perform thisAsana for 5 minutes. You will be fit again to consider your hard work with the same old vigour. This is a blessingforall hard workers.

TECHNIQUES OF YOGIC BREATHING

Prana is the universal principle of energy or force. It is all-pervading. It may be either in a static or in a dynamic state. It is found in all forms from the highest to the lowest, from the ant to the elephant, from the unicellular amoeba to man, from the elementary forms of plant life to the developed forms of animal life. It is Prana that shines in your eyes. It is through the power of Prana that the ear hears, the eye sees, the skin feels, the tongue tastes, the nose smells, the brain and the intellect do their functions. The smile in a young lady, the melody in the music, the power in the emphatic words of an orator, the charm in the speech of one's beloved are all due to Prana. Fire burns through Prana. Wind blows through Prana. River flows through Prana. The aeroplane moves in the air through Prana. Trains and motor cars move through Prana. Radio waves travel through Prana. Prana is electron. Prana is force. Prana is magnetism. Prana is electricity. It is Prana that pumps the blood from the heart into the arteries of blood vessels. It is Prana that is responsible for the processes of digestion, excretion and secretion.

Prana is expended by thinking, willing, acting, moving, talking, writing, etc. A healthy, strong man has abundance of Prana or nerve force or vitality. The Prana is supplied by food, water, air, solar energy, etc. The supply of Prana is taken up by the nervous system. The Prana is absorbed by breathing. The excess of Prana is stored in the brain and nerve centres. When the seminal energy sublimates, or transforms, it supplies abundance of Prana to the system. It is stored up in the brain in the form of Ojas. Ojas is nothing but Prana.

The Yogi stores abundance of Prana by a regular Practiceof Pranayama just as a storage battery can be made to storeelectricity. That Yogi who has stored up a large supply of Pranaradiates strength and vitality all round. He is a mightypowerhouse. Those who come in close contact with him imbibePrana from him, and get strength, vigour, vitality and exhilaration of spirits. Just as water flows from one vessel to another,Prana actually flows like a steady current from a developedYogi towards weak persons. This can be actually seen by the Yogi who has developed his inner Yogic vision.

Pranayama is the control of the Prana and the vital forces of the body. It is regulation of the breath. This is a most important step. The aim of Pranayama is the control of Prana. Pranayama begins with the regulation of the breath for having control over the life-currents through the control of breath. Breath is the external manifestation of the gross Prana. A correct habit of breathing must be established by the regular practice of Pranayama. In ordinary worldly persons the breathing is irregular.

If you can control the Prana you can completely control all the forces of the universe, mental and physical. The Yogi can also control the omnipresent manifesting power out of which all energies take their origin, whether magnetism, electricity, gravitation, cohesion, nerve-currents, vital forces or thought vibrations; in fact, the total forces of the universe-physical and mental.

If one controls breath or Prana, the mind is also controlled. He who has controlled his mind has also controlled his breath. If one is suspended, the other is also suspended. If the mind and the Prana are both controlled one gets liberation from the round of births and deaths and attains immortality. There is an intimate connection between the mind, Prana and semen. If one controls the seminal energy, the mind and Prana are also controlled. He who has controlled his seminal force has also controlled his Prana and mind.

When you wish to hear a faint sound, the breath gets automatically suspended for short time. The coolie who carries heavy bags of rice at the railway station instinctively fills his lungs with air and practises unconscious retention of the air (Pranayama) till the bag is lifted on to his back. He who crosses a small rivulet by jumping, he who practises long jump and high jump and various other exercises with the parallel barspractises retention of breath instinctively. This retention of breath augments his vitality, strength. It provides abundance of energy immediately.

Just as a goldsmith removes impurities from gold by heating it in a hot furnace and by blowing strongly through a blowpipe, so also the Yogic student removes the impurities of the body and the Indriyas by blowing his lungs, i.e., by practising Pranayama.

The chief aim of Pranayama is to unite the Prana with the Apana and take the united Prana-apana slowly upwards to the head. The effect or fruit of Pranayama is awakening of the sleeping Kundalini.

Pranayama, though it concerns the breath only, gives good exercise also to the various internal organs, and the whole body. Pranayama removes all sorts of diseases, improves health, energises digestion, invigorates the nerves, removes passion and awakens Kundalini Sakti. It bestows good health and a steady mind. A Pranayama practitioner can stop his breath. People can break stones on his chest. He does not feel anything because he has controlled his Prana. A Pranayama practitioner will have a light body free from diseases, a very fair complexion, a sweet melodious voice, and a pleasant smell from his body.

He who practises Pranayama will have good appetite, cheerfulness, a handsome figure, great strength, courage, enthusiasm, a high standard of health, vigour and vitality and good concentration of the mind. This Pranayama is quite suitable for people in the West and East, men and women.

A Yogi measures the span of his life not by the number of years but by the number of breaths. You take in a certain amount of energy or Prana from the atmosphere along with each breath. Vital capacity is the capacity of a man to inhale the largest quantity of air after the deepest possible exhalation. A man takes fifteen breaths in a minute. So, the total number of breaths amounts to 21,600 per day.

The room in which you practise Pranayama must not be damp or ill-ventilated. It must be dry and airy. You may practise by the side of a river or lake, in the corner of a garden in the open air, when there is no chill or draught of cold air or on the top or the foot of a hill. The practice of Pranayama should be performed daily with the mind firmly fixed on Truth. Then theChitta is absorbed in the Sushumna. Consequently, the Prana becomes steady. It does not fluctuate. Pranayama requires deep concentration and attention.

There should be no strain at any stage in the practice of Pranayama. You should experience joy and pleasure in doing the same. You should not feel any undue strain. Always inhale and exhale very slowly. Do not make the least sound. Whenever you feel uneasy, depressed, or dejected, practise Pranayama.

The practice of Kumbhaka (retention) in Pranayama produces heat and thereby the Kundalini Sakti is awakened and passes upwards along the Sushumna Nadi. Kumbhaka increases the period of life also. Mild Kumbhaka during the practice of Asana augments the efficacy of Asanas and gives increased power and vitality. During the practice of Pranayama repeat your Ishta Mantra (Japa). That will be pure Yoga.

As there is always some drowsiness when one gets up from bed, it is advisable to do a few Pranayamas, 10 to 20 mild Kumbhakas just to drive off drowsiness and to make you fit for meditation. The mind gets one-pointed after the practice of Pranayama.

Sukhapurvaka

(Easy, Comfortable Pranayama)

Sit in the Padmasana or Siddhasana pose in your meditation room. Close the right nostril with the right thumb. Draw in the air very slowly through the left nostril. Then close the left nostril also with the little and ring fingers of the right hand. Retain the air as long as you can comfortably keep. Then exhale very, very slowly through the right nostril after removing the thumb.

Then draw in the air through the right nostril. Retain the air as before and exhale it very, very slowly through the left nostril after removing the little and ring fingers. All these six processes constitute one Pranayama. Do 5 Pranayamas to start with and increase the number gradually. You can do 20 Pranayamas at a sitting.

Have a Bhava (mental attitude) that all the Daivi Sampat (Divine qualities) such as mercy, love, forgiveness, Santi, joy, etc., are entering into your system along with the inspired air and that all the Asuri Sampat (devilish qualities) such as lust, anger, greed, etc., are being thrown out along with the expired air. Repeat Om mentally during Puraka (inhalation). Kumbhaka (retention) and Rechaka (exhalation).

This Pranayama removes all diseases, purifies the Nadis, steadies the mind in concentration, improves digestion, increases the digestive fire and the appetite, helps to maintain Brahmacharya and awakens the Kundalini Sakti. Purification of Nadis will set in rapidly.

For Puraka, Kumbhaka and Rechaka, the ratio is 1:4:2. If you inhale for 4 seconds, retain the air for 16 seconds and then exhale for 8 seconds. You can gradually increase these to 16, 64 and 32 seconds respectively.

Ujjayi

Adopt the Padmasana or the Siddhasana pose. Close the mouth. Inhale slowly through both the nostrils in a smooth uniform manner till the breath seems to fill the space between the throat and the heart. Retain the breath as long as you can comfortably and then exhale through the left nostril by closing the right nostril with your right thumb. Expand the chest when you exhale. During inhalation a peculiar sound is produced owing to the partial closing of the glottis. The sound produced during inhalation should be of a mild and uniform pitch. It should be continuous also. This Pranayama can be practised even while walking or standing. Instead of exhaling through the left nostril, you can exhale slowly through both nostrils.

This Pranayama removes the heat in the head. The gastric fire is increased. It removes phlegm from the throat. Asthma, consumption and all sorts of pulmonary diseases are cured. Everything is accomplished by Ujjayi. The practitioner is never attacked by diseases of phlegm, nerves, dyspepsia, dysentery, enlarged spleen, consumption, cough, or fever. Perform Ujjayi to destroy decay and prevent death.

Sitali

Protrude the tongue a little away from the lips. Fold the tongue like a tube lengthwise. Draw in the air through the mouth with the hissing sound SI. Retain the breath as long as you can withcomfort. Then exhale slowly through both the nostrils. Practise this 6 times. You can do this even while standing or walking. This Pranayama purifies the blood. It quenches thirst and appeases hunger. It destroys Gulma (chronic dyspepsia), inflammation of various chronic diseases, fever, consumption, indigestion, bilious disorders, etc. You will find this extremelyuseful in summer.

Bhastrika

In Sanskrit "Bhastrika" means bellows. Rapid succession of forcible expulsions is a characteristic feature of Bhastrika. Just as a blacksmith blows his bellows rapidly, so also you will have to move your breath rapidly.

Sit in Padmasana. Keep the body, neck and head erect Close the mouth. Now inhale and exhale quickly ten times like the bellows of a blacksmith. Constantly dilate and contract the chest. Forcibly and quickly inhale and exhale ten times and then take a deep inhalation through both the nostrils. Retain the breath as long as you can do with comfort and then exhale completely. This is one round of Bhastrika. You can do this 4 times. After some practice, you can gradually increase the number of expulsions to 20. You can do two rounds in a sitting You will not feel any fatigue, if you take a little rest after each round. Then you will be fresh for the next round. The number of expulsions for each round is determined by the strength and capacity of the practitioner. You must not go to extremes. Practise regularly every day and gradually increase the number of rounds.

There is another variety of Bhastrika wherein only one nostril is used for breathing purposes.

Bhastrika is a powerful exercise. It relieves inflammation of the throat, increases the gastric fire, destroys phlegm, removes diseases of the nose and chest and cures asthma and consumption. It removes all diseases which arise from an excess of wind, bile and phlegm. It gives warmth to the body. It purifies the Nadis considerably. It is the most beneficial of all Kumbhakas. It awakens Kundalini Sakti quickly. For health and strength, practiseBhastrika.

SECRET OF HEALTH

Good health is very essential for man's success in life and Yoga-Sadhana. He who has done good Karmas in his previous birth, enjoys good health in this life. Good health is maintained by observing the laws of health and hygiene. He who is endowed with sufficient vital force enjoys good health. Vital force comes from the one great source of all life, God, or Brahman. Brahmacharya, Japa, meditation, Pranayama, Sattvic food Bugment the vital force and bestow good health, vigour, vim and vitality.

Man overloads his stomach. Overeating is one of the chief causes of disease. It hinders elimination, assimilation and growth. All the organs are overworked and get diseased. Hence avoid overeating, and observe perfect moderation in diet.

Food serves as fuel for this body-engine. It supplies animal heat and vital energy. Wrong food causes accumulation of waste matter, morbid materials and poisons in the system. Highly pungent and spiced dishes are unhealthy. Too much salt causes irritation in the tissues. Salt excites tongue and passion. If the kidneys do not work efficiently, salt increases the oedema or swelling in the tissues. Too much salt shortens life.

If you wish to attain good health, take milk and fruits. Take the juice of tomatoes, oranges and pomegranates. Give up salt, tamarind, chillies, meat, fish, liquors, tobacco, coffee, tea. Take a little salt. Take raw carrots, spinach, salads, lemons, raisins, dates, nuts and almonds. All these are vital foods that contain maximum vitamins and nutrition within small bulk. You can get full quota of vitamins and calories without overloading your stomach.

Those who cannot afford this diet should train their systems to derive maximum strength and vitality even from the simplest food like roti and dal. Too much fastidiousness about food becomes a fad. In reality, the human system can adapt itself to the roughest, natural diet. It can be trained to be hardy and robust.

He who practises Pranayama for ten or fifteen minutes can vitalise all the cells and tissues and supply them with abundant energy. Pranayama for ten minutes, if done without exertion every day, can bestow wonderful health.

Try to live on simple bread and pulse-soup and some vegetables. Do plenty of Japa, meditation and Kirtan. Give up the dietetic fad for vitamins and balanced diet. During Japa and meditation, abundant energy flows from the Lord within, and the whole system is galvanised and vitalised.

The person of strong will, fixed determination, firm faith, who relies fully upon the Indweller within, does not care even if he gets no food. He sustains himself through his inner power. Food comes to him automatically.

Though there is a great deal of truth in the statements of dieteticians and nutritionists, with regard to balanced diet, vitamins, etc., still they make too much fuss. They become faddists ultimately.

If simple, healthy food is eaten, there will not be unnatural craving for non-essential dishes.

Some of the modern doctors hold that faulty diet, which leads to faulty nutrition, is the primary cause of a large group of diseases. They add that secondary weakness, due to old age, debilitating habits like alcoholism, poverty of blood, etc., contribute to the development of diseases.

But the primary cause of disease is evil Vasanas or desires. Sin and passion are the real causes of diseases. You will have to trace the origin of a disease in the mind first.

If you become angry, blood becomes churned; various poisons are generated in the blood. These poisons cause various sorts of diseases. Hatred produces diverse ailments. Greed and jealousy poison the whole system.

If the mind is joyful, there are strength, health, peace, etc. If the mind is depressed, there are ill-health, weakness and disorder. Bacteria or germs have their upper hand when the mind is depressed and weak. They cannot do much havoc even if they are present in the system, when the mind is joyful and healthy.

The primary condition for health are proper food, a well-disciplined and regulated divine life. You should practise self-restraint, Japa, Kirtan, meditation and study of the sacred scriptures. This is very, very important.

The Immortal Soul (Atman) is Anamaya (free from all diseases). He who practises Brahmacharya and meditates on this diseaseless, decayless, deathless Atman, in right earnest, enjoys longevity, good health, a high standard of vigour and vitality, and attains immortality.

Asana, Pranayama, Japa, Kirtan, meditation are the most potent tonics. Even chronic, incurable diseases can be alleviated by these Yogic methods. They fill the mind and the body with Sattva, regenerate, renovate and energise the cells and tissues. They act as divine elixir.

All the lower emotions such as hatred, anger and lust should be controlled by the practice of love, forgiveness, selfless service, purity and self-restraint. The mind should be kept ever serene, calm and tranquil, by daily prayer, Japa, Kirtan and meditation.

There is little use of medicines when you are a victim of the surging lower emotions. Treat the cause first. Treat the mind first. Good health will come by itself. He who ever keeps the mind calm, seldom suffers from disease as the sick do.

BENEFITS OF FASTING

The whole body is renovated and energised by occasional fasting. New tissues and new cells are formed. The body is charged with vigour and vitality. Fasting purifies the nerves and the nerve-centres. The tissues and organs are supplied with abundant life-energy. Mind is strengthened. Will-power is augmented.

Fasting is nature's curative agent. The blood is cleansed by fasting. Man eats too much. The digestive organs are overworked. Giving rest to the overworked organs is a means of good health. Rest is given to the overworked organs by fasting. Plenty of water should be drunk during fasting. This helps the elimination of toxins from the system. Superfluous fat disappears through fasting. But overeating should not follow fasting.

It is highly beneficial to fast occasionally, even though you possess good health. You will enjoy better health and save doctor's bills. A day's fast every fortnight is good.

The mind becomes clear through fasting. You will enjoy peace of mind. Passions will calm down. You will be energetic. The body will be light.

Fasting occasionally cannot kill a man. Fasting brings joy. Instead of complete fast, you can take, if you wish some fresh fruit juice (grape juice, orange juice), a little. Fasting helps to control the turbulent senses and the boisterous mind.

Religious fasts are common in all the religions of the world. Christians fast during Lent. Mohammedans fast during Ramzan. Hindus fast on Ekadasi. The prayer mood will come easily and without effort during fasting. If the stomach is overloaded, sleep, laziness and evil thoughts will come easily.

Ignorant people are unnecessarily alarmed of fasting. Those who have experienced the benefits of fasting cannot leave it. Fast for some hours or half a day in the beginning. Then fast for a day completely.

Fasting checks the course of acute diseases. It is highly beneficial for latent and chronic diseases also. Baths andsun-bath can be beneficially combined with fasting in the treatment of chronic diseases and improvement of general health.

If you cannot fast completely, have liquid diet, such as milk. During fasting do not think of food. Keep the mind fully occupied. You can do your usual daily work. You can walk, study and meditate. Do not lie down idly in bed. This will induce false hunger.

Chapter Eight

THE YOGA OF SELF-CULTURE

BASIS OF PROGRESSAND ACHIEVEMENTS

Right from the very beginning of your life you must understand clearly that in humility, sincere desire to root out pride, egotism and jealousy, earnest and unceasing introspection to find out your defects and improve yourself, lies your hope of progress Without this basis, all sorts of ideals become a delusion and a waste. Man becomes puffed up, unmannerly, proud and egotistic. When this happens all good advice and instructions fall flat upon his ears. Higher influences cease to have any effect as man becomes deliberately and obstinately non-receptive to them, due to a lack of ethical basis.

Always feel that you have a long way to go, and strive diligently to acquire the primary virtues of kindness, charitability, boldness, patience, forbearance, manliness, self-reliance, self-denial, combined with humility, softness of speech and refinement of behaviour. Be ready to serve others whenever there is an opportunity. Learn to put up with unfavourable conditions. Then alone the mind gets strengthened and purified, and good sentiments and spiritual emotions arise in it.

Spirituality means growing into a life of inner refinement and enlightenment. It is transformation of your nature from the instinctive level to the human, to the spiritual. You can hope to achieve real greatness only when you effect this transformation. It is purification and change of heart alone that make concentration and meditation possible. To grow in purity you must entirely destroy the evil side of your nature.

Basis of Spirituality

ever imagine for a moment that you are anywhere near the goal of spiritual success unless and until you strive with earnestness to rid yourself of evil tendencies and get established in a pure, ethical character.

Concentration, meditation and Samadhi (God-consciousness) are still far from him who has not purified himself and gotrid of his evil traits. The greatest harm is done by the fact that even while in an unregenerate state, the aspirant becomes deluded into thinking that he has already progressed considerably in the spiritual path. Yoga is within the scope of every man. but not for the self-deluded idiot.

The unregenerate man lacks sane judgment, discrimination and the faculty of introspection. In ignorance and without discipline, he allows himself to run wild, intolerant of criticism, resentful of the least opposition, disregardful of the feelings of others, and unamenable to advice and correction.

Beware of these dangers and the corrosive factors in life Be vigilant always. Without the eager and earnest desire to improve yourself, without the spirit of service, humility, sincerity. simplicity and eagerness to learn and improve yourself, spiritual practices are useless-like rowing a boat which is firmly anchored to the riverbed or like sowing seeds upon a rocky surface.

Secret of Success

Remember this point clearly. Meditate upon this. Know what true spirituality is. Fully realise the importance of becoming ethically and morally sound before claiming to be a spiritual aspirant. Change the animal nature first. When your senses are disciplined and the mind purified and prepared, success will come by itself, in any spiritual endeavour and even in material undertakings. Happiness will spontaneously flow in and fill you when you have emptied yourself of crudeness, harshness, egotism, pride and all forms of passions. Where there are kindness,

humility and purity, there spirituality springs up, saintliness shines, divinity descends and perfection manifests itself.

Your character depends upon the quality of your thoughts and the mental pictures and ideals entertained by you. If your thoughts are of a base nature, you will have a bad character. If you entertain noble thoughts and sublime ideals, you will have a magnanimous character, you will have magnetic personality, you will be a centre of joy, power and peace.

Learn the science of self-control. Have a steady mind by constant practice of concentration and meditation. Fix your mind upon thespiritual goal of life, and steadily put into practice the noble, divine qualities that truly enrich life. The negative tendencies will vanish, and the conflicting forces reconciled a the face of powerful, positive qualities. You willenjoy perfed harmony, undisturbed happiness and deep, abiding peace.

CHARACTER IS REAL POWER

It is character that gives real force and power to man. Character is real power. The man who has no character is a living corpse. If you want success in life, if you want to progress in the spiritual path and if you wish to have great achievements in the material field, you must possess an unblemished, sound character. The character of man is his greatest strength. Sankara, Buddha, Jesus and other great souls of yore are remembered even now because they were men of sterling character. They influenced people and commanded the respect of others through the force of their character.

A rogue is not an eternal rogue. An evil man is not eternally evil. No one is a sinner for ever. Put these people in the company of saints; they will be newly moulded and gradually acquire saintly qualities. It is within the power of every man to change his bad nature and thoughts. If good thoughts and good ideals are supplanted in place of bad thoughts and evil feelings, man will grow into goodness and virtue. A liar will become a truthful man. A rogue will become a saint.

Supply and Demand

Here I shall give you an exercise. Suppose you want to develop "courage," the first thing to attempt at is that you must cultivate thoughts of courage, meditate on courage, and face difficulties boldly. You should never run away from obstacles, but meet them calmly. The supply can come only when there is the demand. This is the law. If there is no desire in you to develop this quality, first try to create a desire for it by taking into account its advantages. Will follows desire just as the dog follows the master.

Feel that you must possess this virtue. Mentally repeat the words "Courage is my birthright; I am no longer weak," several times. Feel: "I am in possession of this quality." Use your imagination strongly. Imagine that you have this virtue and try to put it into practice. Think again and again of the positive advantages of this noble quality.

Gradually this virtue will develop. Do not be discouraged if you do not get success in a few days. The force of the old impressions of timidity and fear will pull you down, but you must never lose your heart, and keep on persevering. Eventually the new impressions of courage will win. The positive ultimately overcomes the negative.

Cultivation of Virtues

Likewise, you can develop any good quality. Develop that virtue in which you are conspicuously lacking. Courage, compassion unselfish love, nobility, forgiveness, contentment, purity, truth. fulness and sincerity must be developed one by one. Take up one virtue at a time, regularly meditate on it and practise it always. If you develop one important virtue fully, all other virtues will be easy to acquire

Easy-going habits should be curbed. You must live a disciplined life. Practise control of tongue-in speech as well as in eating. Get up in the early morning, at 4 a.m., and spend the undisturbed hours in prayer, meditation and study of inspiring works. It is natural to feel lazy in getting up in the early morning. You must curb the ease-loving nature. You have to discipline all the senses, one by one.

Sublimation

Do not fight against evil thoughts, evil qualities, defects and bad habits. Discipline is judicious regulation. Discipline is meant for sublimation. Substitute divine thoughts. Develop virtuous qualities. Build up good habits. Be regular in your prayer and meditation. Live the divine life. If you deny food to unholy thoughts or bad habits, they will become weak gradually and wither in course of time, while at the same time as you are engaged in cultivating their opposites. That is called sublimation through substitution. Overcome anger by love, lust by purity, covetousness by liberality, pride by humility, egotism by self-surrender to God.

Be ever intent on buildingup a sound, sterling character. Learn to discriminate. Strengthen the will through self-restraint. Practise concentration. Introspect and find out your defects. Admit your faults to yourself. Do not justify them. Resolve to correctthem. Apply yourself tenaciously. Plod on diligently. Persevere assiduously. Avoid evil company. Remember theDivine. You will succeed definitely.

PRECIOUS JEWELS FOR EVERY MAN

Actions produce impressions. The impressions coalesce together through repetition and form tendencies. Tendencies develop into habits, and habits into character. Character generates will. If the character is pure and strong, the will also will be pure and strong, and vice versa.

If you sow the seed of a good habit, it will grow gradually and assert itself to gain a seat in the mind.

Sow the Habit of Selfless Service

Cultivate the habit of doing selfless service. When you have tasted the bliss of selfless service, you can never leave it.

The force of selfless service will induce you to work more with great zeal and enthusiasm. You will gain immense inner strength and purity of heart. Your heart will be filled with sympathy, mercy and pure love.

Selfless service is worship; it is meditation by itself, it will make you serve everyone with pure love, without any idea of agency, and without expectation of fruits or reward thereof. Service of humanity is, indeed, worship of God.

The spirit of service must deeply enter into your very bones, cells, tissues, nerves. Practise and you will feel the Ananda or the bliss of the soul; evince intense zeal and enthusiasm in work, and you will be filled with inner happiness.

It is, indeed, thus shall you get knowledge of the Self, purity of mind, and the great reward for your actions, giving unbounded peace, strength and joy. When work is done without any sort of selfish motive, you will feel its effects-purity and inner strength.

Even if you do a little service to the country or to society or to the poor, sick people, it has got its own advantages and benefits. It purifies your lower nature, and the impressions of these good actions get embedded in your subconscious, which would impel you to do more and more good actions.

Sympathy, love, the spirit of goodwill and service will be developed. Service will keep your mind fully occupied, while getting rid of all mental weaknesses.

Walk in the Path of Righteousness

Walk in the path of righteousness, and wake up from the slumber of ignorance. Take care of your company, and yourthoughts; you will have much inner peace.

Scrutinise your motives; let them be absolutely pure. Do not become a victim of sloth, inertia. Pour forth all your energies in the service of humanity, in doing Sadhana. As you do your work, let the mind be partly devoted to the remembrance of God. A portion of the mind will be doing meditation and Japa, while you do your routine work. You can cultivate this habit gradually. It is particularly easy in the case of manual work.

You have to think rightly, act rightly, speak rightly, behave rightly, and entertain noble and sublime thoughts.

Have supreme self-confidence and courage, and whatever you do, do with a will to succeed, and you will succed!

Above all, be always joyful and cheerful. Try to do daily at least one virtuous action. Lead a simple, natural life, with sublime idealism. Develop ethical virtues, control the mind and the senses. Be self-controlled, be just, know the right, keep your promise, be noble and impartial. Be practical. Have a sound commonsense. Be

courageous, candid and modest. Respect your superiors, be ever vigilant and have perfect control over your anger and other emotions.

Rely on Your Own Self

Rely on your own self; endure suffering patiently; be patient; persevere and help others as much as you are able to.

Entertain holy aspiration, and shine in divine virtues. Do not depend on others for anything. Life may be interdependent, but those who depend on others, for the sake of dependence, will not be quite happy.

Mutuality is not dependence. Mutuality is the law of life. You can be thoroughly self-reliant, and yet be guided by the principle of mutuality, i.e., accept from others such amount ofservice and help as you will be able to return back in some form or other.

Do your duty and leave the rest to God. Have definite ideals, mottoes and principles, and adhere to them firmly and steadily, and do not deviate from them for the sake of convenience.

Cultivate a very strong faith in God, for it is the gateway to Him. Faith can work wonders. Always act with faith and determination and be firm in your resolve and application.

The sap of life is faith and illumination. No faith, no devotion. No faith, no wisdom. Bad company, lust, greed, infatuated love, and unwholesome food are enemies of faith.

Be Patient and Strong

Be patient in difficulties, dangers, troubles. Stand firm and overcome obstacles; have a burning desire for liberation.

Master your emotions, impulses, and be strong in your aspiration and firm in your convictions, if you want to get success in any walk of life.

Be sweet in your speech, but speak little. Speak lovingwords; never utter any word that can wound the feelings of others. Try to speak the truth always; try to put a check on the impulse of speech.

Kill evil thoughts with the sword of discrimination. Counter them by entertaining sublime thoughts.

Purify your mind by repeating the Lord's Name; withdraw all senses from external objects, and focus them on the Lord; bring the mind under your control. Introspect.

Take Sattvic food, develop dispassion, and have perfect faith in yourself, on the strength of faith in God.

Put on the armour of discrimination. Hold the shield of dispassion. Blow the conch of courage. Kill the enemies-doubt, ignorance, passion and egotism.

Centres of Strength

Courage, power, strength, wisdom and joy are your divine heritage, your birthright. Do not forget that. Have these as centres of thought, influence and power.

You should try your level best to keep cool and calm under difficulties, adversities and unfavourable conditions. You have to pray from the bottom of your heart for strength and guidance. Help is bound to come, if you have firm, perfect and one-pointed faith in God.

Have always a concentrated mind in any work you take up. Forget not the goal; keep watching, praying, conquering obstacles. Do not give indulgence to the mind and a long rope to your thoughts in the negative direction.

All sorts of fears, miseries and troubles will melt away when the knowledge of God dawns. Form a strong habit of remembering God at all times, of controlling the senses and to be balanced in pleasure and pain, love and hate, praise and censure.

Sow the seeds of good habits.

INDISPENSABILITY OF SELF-RESTRAINT

Self-control is an indispensable requisite for living a truly ethical life. Without self-restraint, the practice of ethics is quite impossible. You may possess sublime sentiments, noble intentions. But when you have no self-control, you will be a slave to base passions. You will succumb to all temptations and commit endless wrong actions. You may want to lead an ethical life, but due to weak will and lack of self-control you would fail. It is self-control which enables you to stick to the laws of ethics.

Self-control leads to the highest merit. Self-control is the eternal duty of man. Self-mastery surpasses, in merit, charity, worship and study of the Scriptures.

Self-control increases energy. Self-discipline is highly sacred. Through self-control you will be purified of all your sins, have abundant energy, and, thereafter, you will acquire the highest blessedness.

Self-control is the rarest virtue in this world. Through self-control you can enjoy the highest happiness. Gifted with self-control, you will win all great virtues.

The self-controlled man sleeps happily, awakes happily, and moves through the world happily. He is always cheerful.

Self-control is the best of vows. It should be spontaneous.

The man who is devoid of self-control always suffers misery. He brings upon himself many calamities, all begotten by his own faults.

Forgiveness, patience, abstention from injury, impartiality, truth, sincerity, control of the senses, mildness, modesty, firmness, liberality, freedom from anger, contentment, sweetness of speech, benevolence, freedom from malice-all these combined make up self-control. It also consists of respect for the preceptor and mercy for all. The man of self-control avoids both exaggerated adulation and slander. Depravity, infamy, falsehood, lust, covetousness, pride, arrogance, self-justification, fear, envy and disrespect, are all shunned by the man of self-control. He is free from envy.

The self-controlled man is never fettered by the attachments originating from earthly connections and sentiments. By forgiveness, the man of self-control may easily acquire happy relationship with all.

In all the modes of life, the practice of self-control is distinguished above all virtues. The self-controlled man becomes desirous of liberation. He quietly accepts joys and griefs, but is never overjoyed or depressed by either.

The man of self-control is shorn of vindictiveness and all sorts of guile. He is unaffected by the course of his fate. He is well-balanced. He has good manners. He has purity, fortitude. He has perfect mastery over his passions. He rejoices under all circumstances. He is ever happy.

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ANALYSIS

Daily self-analysis or self-examination for a few minutes is indispensable. Then alone can you remove your defects and grow in spirituality. A gardener watches the young plants very carefully. He removes the weeds daily. He puts a strong fence around the plants. He waters them at the proper time. Then alone do they grow well and yield fruits duly. Even so, you should find out your defects through daily introspection and self-analysis, and then eradicate them through suitable methods.

If one method fails, you must adopt combined methods. You should take recourse to Satsanga or association with the wise, Pranayama, meditation, dietetic regulation, etc. You should overcome, not only the big waves of pride, hypocrisy, lust and anger, that manifest on the surface of the conscious mind, but also their subtle impressions which lurk in the corners of the subconscious. Then only are you safe.

These subtle impressions are very dangerous. They lurk like thieves and attack you when you are not vigilant, when your dispassion wanes, when you slacken your daily spiritual practice, and when you are provoked. If these defects do not manifest even under extreme provocation on several occasions, even when you are not practising regular introspection and self-analysis, you can be sure that the subtle impressions are also obliterated.

The practice of introspection and self-analysis demands patience, perseverance, tenacity, application, iron will, strong determination, subtle intellect and courage to accept your shortcomings. The fruits are immortality, supreme peace and infinite bliss. You will have to pay a heavy price for this. Therefore you should not murmur when you do daily analysis. You should apply your full mind, heart, intellect and soul to spiritual practice. Then only is rapid success possible.

Keep daily spiritual diary and practise self-analysis for five minutes at night. Note down how many good actions you have done, and what mistakes you have committed during thecourse of the day. Resolve: "I will not yield to anger tomorrow. I will speak the truth tomorrow without any lapse or injury."

Self-analysis should not become an obsession. It should not serve as a damper to your spirit. You should be able to analyse yourself in a detached manner, as would a judge examine his case. If there are more defects, instead of being depressed, you should be more resolute to overcome them. If there is a good quality, you should not feel great about it, either.

PLEASURE AND PAIN

Pleasure is a particular mental state. It is a kind of exhilaration. Raga (attraction) causes pleasure. Dvesha (repulsion) causes pain. The mind expands itself in a moment of pleasure. It contracts in a moment of pain. They both are only relative states of mind. Really pleasure and pain have no real, lasting existence. What is really pleasure for one man may be pain to another. What is pleasure to a man at a particular time is pain to the same man at another time. The first two cups of milk give you some pleasure. The third cup induces distaste, and the fourth cup nausea and retching. There is no real, everlasting pleasure in the objects of the world.

Pleasure and pain are not two separate entities by themselves. They are the obverse and the reverse sides of the same coin. The difference is not in kind but in the application. They are a pair of the opposites, each interacting differently. Both pleasure and pain are subjective. Both of them can be mentally converted through a strong will, by the change in your Bhavana or mental attitude. Many vegetarian students from India, who go abroad for higher or special studies, become avid meat-eaters. Meat was repulsive to them when they were at their homes. Mere sight of meat would then induce in them disgust. How is it that they are able to relish meat with avidity, now? All this takes place by simple change in the attitude of thinking caused by external influences.

Culturing of Emotions

There is fluctuation in pleasure and pain. There is no continuous wave of pleasure and pain in the mind. If there is a continuous wave of pain, man will not be able to live even for a few days. The mind cannot always dwell on pain or pleasure. It is a great blessing. If you are in constant anxiety of death, then you may actually die in a short time. The varied objects of the world serve as diverting agents for the mind.

Amidst all pleasures of various kinds, fear, foreboding, care and worry blight your happiness and give you pain. There is a wave of pleasure for five minutes, and then it is followed by a wave of pain for the next five minutes. This rhythm continues throughout the life of man. Watch carefully your feelings through introspection. You will find that they are a jumble of mixed emotions. Therefore, on the spiritual path, culturing of emotions constitutes a vital Sadhana. The man who has no control over emotions is like a dry leaf tossed about by the vagaries of the wind. Here self-control and sublimation play an effective role. Little elations should not make you lose your head Little feelings of depression, caused by little things, should not break your heart.

Wrong Identification

Most mental sufferings are caused by ignorance. This is due to the identification with the physico-mental personality of man and attachment to the body and to those who are associated with it. When this erroneous notion vanishes, you attain freedom from mental suffering, by identifying yourself with the nameless and formless Reality. Mental suffering is only ignorance. In deep sleep, you do not experience any pain. It is because you had not been aware of your identity with your body. Then. When another man's son dies, you do not grieve. It is because there was no identification of your personality with that of the son of the other man.

Pain is caused by the injection of negative emotions into the brain. Absence of light is darkness. Darkness is not a real entity. Darkness has a negative existence. So, too, Maya has a negative existence. When light is brought, darkness vanishes. Similarly when knowledge comes, Maya disappears. Absence of pleasure is pain. Pleasure is the womb of pain. The pleasures that are born from contact with objects are truly wombs of pain. They have a beginning and an end. The really wise men do not rejoice in the pleasures wrought by the senses, nor grieve because of the miseries caused by worldly factors. They are rooted in the consciousness of their spiritual source, which is devoid of pleasure and pain, but is full of supernatural happiness.

Pairs of Opposites

You can never achieve absolute happiness in a relative, physical plane constituted of the pairs of the opposites. The pairs of the opposites rotate in their turn. Death follows life. Night follows day. Light follows darkness. Pain follows

pleasure. If really want God, youwillhavetoriseaboveall objects of pleayou sure-sensation, and eschew the desire for them. If you really wantGod,youwillhavetocrucify the desires of the flesh. You cannot have God and sensual enjoyment at the sametime.Itisonlythoseweaklings and hypocrites, who cannot give up attachment to the objects of the world, thinkthattheycanrealiseGodby leading a worldly life and doing a superficial type of Sadhana for a few minutes everyday.God-realisationisnot as easy as that.

Happiness comes frompeaceofmind.Peaceofmind comes from a mental state wherein there are no mundane desires, no thoughtsoftheobjectsofenjoyment. You would forget all ideas of pleasure-sensation before you enter the actual domain ofpeace.HappinessisinSattva. Happiness is also beyond Sattva. Happiness is in Atman. It is in meditation. It isinthestudyoftheUpanishads.

The best method of gettingridofmentalsuffering is through the will-power to dissociate from body-identification, through diversionofthemind,oritswithdrawal from the individual personality and fixing it on the limitless, attributeless, nameless,formless,desireless,deathless Atman, the source of real, everlasting happiness, the like of which is never knowninthisworldoflimitation. Tattvamasi-Thou art That.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

Virtue and sin, merit and demerit, are relative terms. Yet, life being a relative existence, one's actions and attitude have to take into consideration what is relative. Blemish in one's conduct, of thought, of speech, or action, can be regarded as sin, and its absence as virtue. But there is no absolute sin, or an eternal sinner. Every sin can be remedied by putting into effect their positive counterpart. Every sinner can be a saint, provided he has the will to transform himself.

Service of humanity is virtue; exclusive service of self is sin. Goodwill is virtue; mischief-mongering is sin. Faith in God is virtue; faithlessness is sin. Unselfish love is virtue; possessive infatuation is sin. Independence is virtue; dependence is sin. Purity is virtue, lust is sin. Unity of hearts is virtue; separative tendency is sin.

Knowledge is virtue; ignorance is sin. Strength is virtue; weakness is sin. Courage is virtue; cowardice is sin. Discrimination between right and wrong is virtue; confused self-justification is sin. Commonsense is virtue; foolish daydreaming is sin. Impartiality is virtue; partiality is sin. Charity is virtue; hoarding is sin. Expansiveness is virtue; narrowness is sin. Tolerance is virtue; bigotry is sin.

Cultivate the intellect through study, meditation, observation and company of the wise. A clear intellect helps the aspirant to reach the door of spiritual intuition. Intellect is a hindrance only when it loses the sight of the objective, and wrangles over trifles for the sake of its vanity. An enlightened mind alone can grasp spiritual truths. To an unenlightened mind a spiritual truth could become an untruth, since it might be misconceived and misapplied.

Meditation is good: that is the truth. One must practise meditation every day. But when one holds on to it dogmatically at the cost of other essential values, it becomes a hindrance, much less a means, to spiritual progress. The stupid aspirant thinks that since meditation is essential, he might as well neglect service, even when there is need for the latter.

Service alone will purify the heart. Meditation without the spirit of service might, on the contrary, harden the heart. When there is a patient nearby, and is in need of attendance, if you deny it deliberately and meditate, in that case meditation then becomes a sin. There are the so-called aspirants who would meditate even though a sick man might be in a dying condition in the next room, and would not even care to give him a glass of water!

Moderation is the touchstone of wisdom. Equality of attitude to the high and low and good and bad, and tolerance and broadmindedness, are the touchstones of knowledge. Right conduct is the touchstone of ethics. Humility, natural and spontaneous, is the touchstone of greatness. Truthfulness is the touchstone of a higher state of evolution. Love is the touchstone of devotion. Unselfishness is the touchstone of virtue. Oneness is the touchstone of Self-realisation.

Human nature is an amalgamof mixed qualities. Everyone has two sides of what is called human nature: one is animal and the other spiritual.Both counteract each other. The negative side may hold the ruling whip, but by strengthening the positive side,theformer can be overcome.

Chapter Nine

THE YOGA OF MENTAL CULTURE

CONQUEST OF MIND

Man can bore a diamond with a bristle; he can tie an infatuated elephant with a slender silken thread; he can exercise his ingenuity and through the instrumentality of a mirror bring down the moon for the play of the child; he can make the flame of fire burn always downwards; but it is difficult for him to establish a control over his own mind. For gaining mastery over the mind, he has to know what the mind is, how it works, how it deceives him at every turn and by which methods it can be subdued As long as the mind restlessly wanders about amidst objects, ever fluctuating, excited, agitated and uncontrolled, the true joy of the Self cannot be realised and enjoyed. To control the restless mind and bring all thoughts and cravings to a stillness and sublimation, is the greatest problem of man. If he has subjugated the mind, he may be said to be in his subjective freedom and power the emperor of emperors.

In introspection the minditself is the subject of study. A portion of the mind studies the remaining portion of the mind. The higher mind analyses the processes of the lower mind. Introspection is apperception. Just as we watch the work done by a coolie,aportion of the mind watches the movements of the rest of the mind. By a careful watch and vigilance, manydefects are detected and removed; by suitable spiritual discipline and Sadhana, the mind comes within one's easycontrol. We need to seek out and utilise an environment which is conducive to calming the mind, and making itshigher enlightened activity possible. Mind must be watched carefully and through subjective introspection find outwhat the mind is engaged with at a particular time and occasion.

DISCRIMINATION FOR MIND-CONTROL

The tendency ofmindseeksarepetitionof the pleasure it once enjoyed. When memory of pleasure arises in the mind, it inducestheworkofwishfulimagination and thinking; and by this process gives an issuance to attachment. Through repetitionahabitisformed.Habit in its turn causes a strong craving or Trishna. Mind then exercises its rule and swayoverthepoor,helpless,weak-willed worldlings. But, as soon as the enlightened process of discriminationbeginstowork,thepowerof mind becomes weakened in its downward strength. The mind with all its dissipativeactivitiesandextroverttendencies tries to recede, to retrace its steps to its original home-the spiritualheart.Theactionofdiscrimination dispels the darkness of ignorance; its light eliminates the wrong modes of mentalwork.Whendiscriminationisawakened, the limitations of the mind are transcended and the will becomes stronger and stronger.

IntheYogi,discriminationassumes, at the final stage, a sevenfold status: first four relate to the objective side and thenextthreetothesubjectiveside. In the first stage, the Yogi has the strong sense that all that has to be known, hasbeenknown,thatthereremains nothing further to know. The dissatisfied state of mind has disappearedandallhisdoubtshavevanished. In the second stage, his experience finds that nothing can impart pain to him;inthethird,hefeelsthatbyattaining Kaivalya, he has attained to everything. The positive sense of having fulfilledhisduties,occupiesthefourth stage, and here he is known as Krita-kritya. In the fifth plane of discriminativeconsciousness,themindfinds itself in complete rest; in the sixth, the modes of Nature efface themselves totally,nevertoriseagain.Inthe seventh stage, the Yogi establishes himself in his own inner Being of Delight and Knowledge,theKevalaPurusha.

TEN METHODS FOR CONQUEST OF MIND

Mind is a bundle of Vasanas (desires) and Sankalpas (thought, imagination). Mind is a bundle of Raga-Dvesha (likes and dislikes). Annihilation of mind is Manonasa.

Manolaya is temporary absorption of the mind. This cannot give Moksha. The mind can come back again and wander in sensual objects. Manonasa alone can give release or Moksha.

i. By Vichara:

How is the mind purified, brought under control and how are its activities stopped, and how is it annihilated? Here are some useful and practical points. Mind can be controlled and annihilated by Vichara or enquiry of 'WHO AM I?' This is the best and most effective method. This will annihilate the mind. This is the Vedantic Method. Realise the unreality of the mind through philosophical thinking.

ii. By Eradication of Ego:

Eradicate the feeling of egoism. Ego is the seed of the tree of mind. "I"-thought is the source of all thoughts. All thoughts are centered on the little "I". Find out what the little "I" is. This little "I" will dwindle into an airy nothing. It will be absorbed in the Infinite "I" or Para Brahman, the source for the little "I" o Ahamkara (egoism).

The Sun of Self-realisation is fully seen when the cloud o ego disappears.

iii. By Vairagya:

Vairagya (dispassion) is another method for annihilating mind It is distaste for objects of sense-pleasures by finding out the defects in the sensual life. Objects are perishable. Sensua pleasure is momentary and illusory.

iv. By Abhyasa:

Abhyasa or practice is another method. Concentrate the min by fixing it on Brahman. Make it steady. Abhyasa is ceaseles meditation. This leads to Samadhi.

v. By Non-attachment:

Asanga or non-attachment is a sword to destroy the mind. Take the mind away from objects. Detach. Attach. Detach it from the objects. And attach it to the Lord. Do this again and again. The essence of the seed of the sprout of world experience, which is desire, can be destroyed by the fire of non-attachment.

vi. By Vasanakshaya:

Vasanakshaya is another method. Vasana is desire. Renunciation of desires leads to Vasanakshaya. This will lead to annihilation of mind. (Manonasa). Desire for objects of pleasures is bondage: giving it up is emancipation. Desire is the most essential nature of the mind. Mind and egoism are synonymous.

Vii. By Pranayama:

Vibration of Prana causes movement of the mind. It gives life to the mind. Pranayama or control of Prana will stop the activities of the mind. But it cannot destroy the mind to its roots like Vichara.

vii. By Control of Thoughts:

Control the thoughts or Sankalpas. Avoid imagination or daydreaming. The mind will be annihilated. Extinction of Sankalpas alone is Moksha, or release. The mind is destroyed when there is no imagination. The experience of the world illusion is due to your imagination. It vanishes away when imagination is completely stopped.

viii. By Equanimity and Balance:

Mental renunciation of possessions is another method. The Absolute experience can also be realised if you learn to be in a state of thought-suspending Samadhi.

Attainment of equanimity is another method. Be balancedIn pain and pleasures, heat and cold, etc.

ix. By Devotion and Service:

Japa, Kirtan, prayer, devotion, service of Guru and study are also means to annihilate the mind.

He alone experiences everlasting peace and Eternal Bliss who has transcended the mind and rests in his Own Satchidananda Atman.

MENTAL STUDIES IN STRUCTURE

i. What Is Mind

Now then an exposition of the mind, its nature and control. Mind is Atma Sakti. Mind is Maya. Mind is born of Prakriti. It is through mind that Brahman or the Absolute manifests Himself as the universe with heterogeneous objects. Mind is inert. It cannot by itself illumine the objects. It borrows its light from Atman or the Self. The body with its organs is no other than the mind.

ii. Mind as the Universe

All the visible objects do not really exist. The mind alone shines as the cause of all the manifold created objects.

This universe is no other than the mind itself. The Self-light of Para Brahman alone is appearing as the mind or this Universe. Mind alone is the Universe.

iii. Mind as Sankalpa

The form of the mind is Sankalpa alone. The expansion of the mind alone is Sankalpa (thought, imagination). Wherever there is Sankalpa (thought) there does the mind exist. Sankalpa, through its power of differentiation generates this Universe. The Sankalpas and Vasanas which you generate enmesh you as in a net. All men are subject to bondage through their own Sankalpas and Vasanas like a silk worm in its cocoon. If the mind turns its back upon discrimination, it entangles itself in the folds of Vasanas, or desires.

iv. Storehouse of Impressions

Mind is collection of Samskaras or impressions. The mind goes into modifications according to the latent impressions of the past. These impressions are called Samskaras. Mind is a bundle of Vasanas, Sankalpas and likes and dislikes. If you free yourself, from these, the mind dwindles into an airy nothing. Mind is nothing but a bundle of habits, desires and cravings. The mind which is the conditioning vesture of the Soul is a storehouse of impressions. It is attached to the pleasure of senses and is tossed by three Gunas, and hence is liable to disturbance in the form of lust, anger, etc. The true nature of mind is Vasanas or subtle desires

v. Stuff of the Mind

Mind is atomic according to the Nyaya School. Mind is all-pervading according to the Raja Yoga School. It is of middling size, same size as that of the body according to the Vedantic School. Mind is made up of subtle Sattvic matters. It is formed out of the subtlest portion of food. Mind is termed the sixth sense.

vi. Seat of the Mind

According to Vedanta, the seat of mind is the heart. According to the Hatha Yoga School, the seat of mind is Ajna Chakra the space between the two eyebrows. Concentration on the Chakra leads to control of mind easily. During waking state the mind occupies the brain. In dream the seat of mind is the throat. In deep sleep it is the heart.

vii. The Tree of the Mind

The idea of 'I' is the seat of the tree of mind. The sprout which first springs up from this seat of Ahamkara is Buddhi or intellect. From the sprout the ramifying branches called Sankalpas or thoughts have their origin. The poisonous tree of the great Maya's illusion flourishes more and more out of the seed of mind's modification full of Sankalpas in the soil of variegated enjoyments of the world.

viii. Fourfold Antahkarana

When the mind does Sankalpa-Vikalpa, it is called mind. When it discriminates and decides, it is called Buddhi or intellect. When it Self-arrogates it is Ahamkara or egoism. When it remembers and recollects, it is Chitta.

ix. Strata of Mind

Conscious mind is the objective mind. It thinks of objects. Subconscious mind is Chitta. It is the storehouse of impressions. Superconscious mind is cosmic mind.

x. The Three Avasthas

In the waking state (Jagrat) the mind experiences the external objects. In dream mind itself creates the dream-creatures out of the materials supplied by waking experiences. In deep sleep the mind rests in the causal body or Avidya. In Turiya-Avasthathe mind is absorbed in Brahman or the Absolute. There is Nirvikalpa Samadhi or superconscious state.

xi. *The Three Forms of Mind*

The Sattvic mind is calm and harmonious, it intuits, meditates, renounces, enquires and moves towards the Atman. The Rajasic mind is passionate. It wants power, possessions and dominion. It wants to rule over others. The Tamasic mind is heedless. It sleeps. It is full of inertia and darkness. When the Yogi attains Samadhi he rises from the stream of the Gunas and the limitations of the body and mind.

xii. The Sattvic Gunas

When Sattva is increased a peculiar feeling of coolness, calmness, contentment and luminosity are experienced by the aspirant. When Sattvic Guna works in the mental sheath, there is a wonderful calmness. The tossing of the mind stops and concentration develops. When the Sattva Guna powerfully vibrates in the Vijnanamaya sheath or intellect, there is understanding ofcomplex problems. The three Gunas constitute your individuality. They cover your mental, moral, intellectual andspiritual life.

DYNAMICS OF THE MIND

i. Mind Pure and Impure

Suddha Manas or pure mind: this leads to liberation. Asuddha Manas or impure mind: this is the cause for bondage. Suddha Manas is filled with Sattva or purity and divine virtues. Asuddha Manas is filled with impurities such as lust, greed, jealousy, hatred, etc.

ii. Functions of the Mind

It is actions of the mind that are truly termed Karmas. The functions of the mind are Sankalpa, Vikalpa, thinking and doubting. It is the mind that really sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels. Mind can do the five functions of the five senses of perception or Knowledge. Mind connects itself with the five senses of perception and enjoys all sense-objects.

iii. Power of the Mind

The Mind has the potency of creating or undoing the world in the twinkling of an eye. Mind creates the world according to its own Sankalpa or thought. It is the mind that creates this universe (Manomatram Jagat: Manh-Kalpitam Jagat). Through the play of the mind, a Kalpa is reckoned by it as a moment and vice versa. Like a dream generating another dream in it, the mind having no visible form generates existent visibles.

iv. Play of the Mind

The mind assumes the form of any object it intensely thinks of. Through the play of the mind in objects nearness appears to be a great distance and vice versa. In introspection a portion of the mind studies another portion of the mind. The senses can do nothing without the cooperation of the mind. It is the mind that causes bondage and release. Devoted to sense-objects it causes bondage, devoted to the Lord it creates freedom and release. With the growth of the mind, the pains increase, with its extinction, there will be infinite bliss. Mind can do or attend to only one thing at a time.

v. The Mischievous Mind

Mind is the slayer of Atman or the supreme Self. Mind is the birth place of desire. Mind ever whirls far and wide in vain inSensual objects, like a strolling street dog. This puerile mind which ever rises and falls with the ebb and flow of desires, fancies this illusory universe to be true through its ignorance. Ever thirsting after fresh Vishayas or sense-objects the mind is more restless than monkeys.

vi. The Tainted Mind

The stainful mind has not the benevolence to consider other's happiness as its own. So it is ever reeling. The mind has not the complacency to rejoice at another's virtues. Therefore there is no internal contentment. The mind becomes unstable and restless through desires for objects. When the mind is not centred in the Atman, man desires for objects. A mind attached to the pleasures of the senses leads to misery in the shape of births and deaths.

vii. Ripples of the Mind

Vritti is wave in the mind-lake. Lust, anger, etc., are evil Vrittis in the mind. Faith, devotion, dispassion, discrimination, courage, mercy, are good Vrittis in the mind. Jealousy is a form of continuous anger. Arrogance is a form of pride. Insolence is overbearing nature. Irshya is a form of jealousy. Greed intensifies desire, destroys peace of mind and retards spiritual progress. Vismriti is the confused understanding of one who is swayed by evil propensities like passion, anger, greed, etc. Cultivate good Vrittis. The evil Vrittis will die by themselves. Do not attack the evil Vrittis directly.

TECHNIQUE OF MIND CONQUEST

i. Removal of the Three Mental Defects

The three defects or Doshas of the mind are Mala (impurities such as lust, anger, greed), Vikshepa (tossing or oscillation) and Avarana (veil of ignorance). Mala is removed by selfless service. Vikshepa is removed by Upasana, Trataka and Pranayama. Avarana or veil is removed by study and practice of Vedanta.

ii. The Difficulty of Mind-Control

It is possible to drink the contents of the ocean, walk over fire and water, fly in the air, eradicate the Himalayas to its root, and swallow the flaming fire, but it is difficult to control the mind. The struggle with the mind is most distasteful and bitter in the first stage of the Sadhana. Mind cannot be controlled by mere human effort. The grace of the Lord and Guru is necessary. Control of the mind is the first step to spirituality. Victory over the mind means victory over the world. Self-conquest or conquest of the mind is the greatest victory. Yoga aims at arriving at the silence of the mind which makes possible the right meditation.

iii. Conquest by Yoga and Jnana

You can control the mind through Yoga and Jnana. For some it is easy to control the mind through Yoga and Jnana. For some it is easy to control the mind through Yoga, for some through Jnana. All the practices which go in the name of Yoga are just to concentrate the mind and still it. When the mind goes outward, restrain and steady it on the innermost Self or Atman that dwells in the chambers of your heart. When your mind is agitated withdraw into silence and regain the inner calm and tranquillity. The mind attains through discrimination, enquiry and meditation the peace of the Eternal.

iv. Need for Intelligent Methods

Do not try to control the mind through violent methods. You will miserably and hopelessly fail. Conquer the mind slowly and carefully through intelligent means. Overcome desires and aversion by means of meditation. Enter silence and rest peacefully for ever. The mind must be slowly and carefully conquered by this power of the will diverted from the path of unrighteousness to the path of meditation. The impurities of the mind are removed and Tamas is annihilated by the ceaseless practice of selfless service, feeling all the time that service is the worship of the Lord. Mind is the dividing wall between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. If the mind is destroyed the individual soul becomes identical with the Supreme Soul.

Mind in its natural state is endowed with purity, immortality and peace. When the oil in a lamp becomes exhausted, the flame is absorbed in its cause; similarly, the mind deprived of the support of all objective pleasure-seeking centres, becomes calm and gets absorbed in Brahman or the Absolute.

iv. Pratipaksha Bhavana

Do not fight evil. Replace it by the opposite good, and the evil automatically will vanish. Do not try to drive away impure thoughts. The more you try, the more they will return. Entertain pure thoughts. Pure Vasanas tend to develop the true Jnana or wisdom. Annihilate the impure or lower mind with the help of the pure or higher mind and transcend the help of the pure or higher mind and transcend the higher mind also. Fill the mind with divine thoughts. The impure thoughts will gradually vanish by themselves. Like an iron shaping another iron, the mind should correct and mould your impure mind.

v. Conquest by Abhyasa

Steadying or fixing the mind on one point is called Abhyasa. If you eradicate all desires and thoughts, the mind will die by itself. Dispassion and inner and outer control must be practised together with intense meditation on Atman. When the mind wanders bring it back and try to fix it on the Divine Light within the centre of your heart. Detach

the mind from all thoughts of sense-objects through Vairagya (dispassion) and centre it upon the Lord. Vairagya (dispassion) and Abhyasa (concentration and meditation) are the weapons to annihilate this turbulent mind.

vii. The Role of Pranayama

The mind attains steadiness through the practice of Pranayama or regulation of breath. Slay this mind through the destruction of the Vasanas or the control of Prana andBrahma-Vichara (enquiry into the nature of Brahman). The mind is purified by the practice of selfless service, Japa, Tapas, right conduct, practice of Yama, Niyama and meditation. Overcome sleep by regulating your diet and taking only light, Sattvic food and by the practice of Asanas and Pranayama. As gold melted in fire is purified of its dross, so can the mind be purified by control of Prana or the vital airs.

AURA AND THE DYNAMICS OF A DEVELOPED MIND

Thought is a vital, living force the most vital, subtle and irresistible force that exists in the universe. Thoughts are living things: they move; they possess form, shape, colour, quality. Substance, power and weight. We may cease to be, but thoughts can never die. Thought is the real action; it reveals itself as a dynamic force. A thought of joy creates sympathetically a thought of joy in others. The birth of a noble thought is a potent antidote to counteract an evil thought. Through the instrumentality of exercised positive thought, we come to acquire creative power. Particularly around the developed mind, we sense the manifest phenomenon of a powerful aura.

The palpable influence of a highly developed mind over a less developed mind, needs to be specially marked. It is not possible to provide a description of what it is like to be in the presence of a Master, or a developed adept. To sit in his presence, though he hardly speaks a word, is to feel a thrilling sensation and discover the impacts of new inspirations that it wields on our minds. Mind carries aura-mental aura or psychic aura. The Sanskrit term for aura is Tejas; it is brilliance or halo that emanates from the phenomenon of mind. In those who have sought the full development of their minds, we find it extremely effulgent. It is capacitated to travel long distances and affect in the most beneficial manner the large numbers of persons who are privileged to come under its influence. It must be noted that the spiritual aura is far more powerful than either the psychic or Pranic or mental aura.

FORMS OF SELF-DECEPTION ON THE PATH

Right from the very beginning of your spiritual life, you must understand clearly that in a sincere desire to rout out gradually pride, egoism and every form of lower nature, and unceasing introspection to discover your own defects and eliminate them, lie your hopes of progress. Without this foundation, any kind of spiritual discipline must be nothing more than a delusion and a waste. In the absence of this basis, the aspirant feels puffed up. more proud and egoistic. When this happens, all good advice and instructions fall flat upon him. Higher influences cease to have any effect as the aspirant becomes deliberately and obstinately non-receptive to them. A continuity of vigilance should be exercised if he is to avoid falling into this dangerous state. Spiritual life is not a light matter. To grow in Yoga is not easy joke. The aspirant should always feel that he is just a beginner and strive diligently to acquire the primary virtues of kindness, charitability, patience, forbearance, perseverance.

Concentration, meditation and Samadhi are still far from him who has not purified himself and got rid of his evil traits. Singing and evil have become so much habit with man that he never feels that he is committing them even though day and night he is, by his own die-hard habits, made to indulge in them. The greatest harm is done by the fact that even while in this unregenerate state, the aspirant becomes deluded by Maya into thinking that he has already progressed considerably in spirituality. He deceives himself with the thought that as far as he is concerned he is pretty advanced in Sadhana, that he has acquired that Nirlipta or detached attitude where he can commit any kind of undesirable act and yet remain unaffected by it.

Under this grave delusion he allows himself to be unrestrained and runs wild, grows intolerant of criticism, resents the least opposition, utterly disregards the feelings of others, and is absolutely unamenable to advice and correction. Even the common courtesy and culture possessed by an ordinary worldly man take leave of the aspirant on account of his presumption of spiritual advancement and growth in wisdom. He becomes disposed to attack even venerable and elderly personsand spiritually superior souls. One should fully realise the importance of becoming a changed person, ethically and morally, before one can lay claim to be a Sadhaka. It becomes necessary for us to avoid carefully the dangersof self-deception by constant vigilance and introspection. When our nature is changed, purified and prepared, theDivine Grace will spontaneously flood our Heart and enlighten us.

MIND-CONQUEST BY THOUGHT CULTURE

'As a man thinkethsohebecometh'Thisisagreattruthortruism.Think'Iamstrong',strongyoubecome.Think'I am weak," weakyoubecome.Think'Iamafool',foolyoubecome.Think'IamasageorGod,sageorGodyou become. Thoughtaloneshapesandmouldsaman.Manlivesalwaysinaworldofthoughts.Everymanhashisown thought-world. Imagination works wonders. Thought has tremendous force. Thought is a solid thing. Your present is the result ofyourpastthoughtsandyourfuturewillbeaccordingtoyourpresentthoughts.Ifyouthinkrightly, you will speakrightlyandactrightly.Speechandactionsimplyfollowthethoughts.

The Western psychologists and occultists lay great emphasis and stress on the purity of thoughts. Thought-culture is anexactscience.Oneshouldcultivaterightthinkingandshoulddriveoutallsortsofvainandworthless worldly thoughts.Hewhoentertainsevilthoughtscausesgreatharmuntohimselfandtotheworldatlarge.He pollutes thethought-world.Hisevilthoughtsenterthemindsofotherswholiveatalongdistance,because thought moveswithatremendouslightningspeed.Evilthoughtsarethedirectcauseforallsortsofdiseases.All diseases taketheiroriginatfirstfromanimpurethought.Hewhoentertainsgood,sublimeanddivinethoughts does immensegooduntohimselfandtotheworldalso.Hecanradiatejoy,hope,solaceandpeacetohisfriends who live at adistance.

In thebeginningofthought-culture,thereisinternalfightbetweenpureandimpurethoughts.Theimpure thought triestoenterthementalfactoryagainandagain.Itasserts:"Olittleman,yougavemeshelterinthe beginning. Youwelcomedmebefore.Yougavemeacordialreception.Ihaveeveryrighttoremaininthelowlands of your mindinyourinstinctivepassionatemind.Whyareyoucrueltowardsme?Ionlygaveyouapushorstimulus in taking youtorestaurantsandhotels,cinemasandtheatres,ball-roomsandbars.Youhadavarietyofenjoyments through mealone.Whyareyouungratefultomenow?Iwillresist,persistandrecuragainandagain.Dowhatever you like. Youareweakthrougholdhabits.Youhavenostrengthtoresist."Eventuallypurethoughtsonlywillgain victory. SattvaisagreaterpowerthanRajasandTamas.Positiveovercomesnegative.

Substitute pure thoughts for impure thoughts This method of substitution (Pratipaksha Bhavana) will destroy all evil thoughts.Thisisveryeasy.ThisisthemethodofRajaYogaThemethodofdrivingthethoughtsat once by will-forceorbyusingtheformula'Getout,Oevilthoughts'isverytaxing.Itisnotsuitableforordinary people. It demandstremendouswill-powerandspiritualstrength.Youmustriseabovepurethoughtsandattain the supremestateofthoughtlessness(Nirvikalpastate).Onlythencanyourestinyourown Svaroopa.Onlythen will BrahmanberevealedlikeAmalakafruitinthepalmofyourhand.Sitinasolitaryplace.Watchyourthoughts carefully. Allow the monkey-mind to jump in its own way for some time. After some time it will climb down. It will become quiet. Be a Sakshi or witness of the menagerie of various thoughts in the internal circus or show. Become a spectator of the mental bioscopic film. Do not identify with the thoughts. Take an indifferent attitude. All thoughts will diebythemselvesonebyone.Youcankillthethoughtsonebyone,justasasoldierinthebattlefieldkillshis enemies oneby one. Repeat mentally 'OmI amSakshi.Who amI?I amthoughtless Atman. I havenothingto do with thesefalsementalpicturesandthoughts.Letthemrollon.Ihavenoconcernwiththem.'Allthoughtswill perish. Themindwillperishlikethegheelesslamp.

Fix the mind on the form of Lord Hari or Lord Siva, or Lord Krishna or your Guru, or any saint like Lord Buddha orLordJesus.Againandagaintrytocallthismentalimageofthepicture.Allthoughtswilldie.Thisis another method,themethodofBhaktas.

MIND-ITS FUNCTIONS, ITS FORCE,

ITS FACTS

i. Mind Creates the World:

The fluctuating power of the mind is dubbed with several names, such as Maya, the impure Vasanas and so on. This fluctuating mind alone is this universe: devoid of this fluctuation, the mind ceases to exist. Differentiation is the inevitable aspect of the mind. The poisonous tree of Maya's illusion flourishes more and more out of the seeds of the mind's modifications in the soil of the variegated enjoyments of the world. Undisciplined mind is the cause of all suffering. Control of mind is Yoga. Disciplined mind leads one to Self-knowledge. Every mind has two aspects-the lower and the higher. The lower mind is predominant in most of the people. It is rooted in impulse. Higher mind is guided by reason and discrimination. Lower mind is the destroyer, the higher mind the redeemer. The higher mind should be used to discipline the lower mind. Mind does the function of attention, selection and synthesizing of sense-impressions. It is the seat of pleasure and pain. Mind is called Ahankara or egoism when conceptions 'I' and 'mine' assert themselves with the signs of anger, jealousy, likes and dislikes. etc. Mind is called Buddhi or intellect because of its faculty of reasoning and discernment.

Though intellect, emotion and will are separate functions, they are inter-connected and inter-blended. The intellect is dependent on the Atman or soul and cannot work without its help. The intellect is very near to Atman and reflects the intelligent quality of the Atman, just as a heated iron ball has got the burning and lustrous qualities of fire. Just as heat is inseparable from fire, fluctuation or oscillation is inseparable from the mind.

Chitta-Vritti can be subdued either by continuously thinking of one thing alone, or by trying not to think at all. In the former method, one should be careful that the mind does not flit to any second object, and the latter, that it does not slump back into torpor or inertia or unconsciousness.

Balance of mind is attained by cultivating an objective attitude, thinking of the imperishable Reality and of the impermanence of objects, discrimination, dispassion and other forms of spiritual disciplines.

II. The Thought-Force:

Thoughts are dormant seeds of action. The mind's acts, andnot the bodily acts are alone true acts. It is the actions of themind that are truly termed Karmas. Thought and act are interdependent. Thoughts constitute the mind. Words are nothingbut the outward expressions of thoughts which are imperceptible. Actions are caused by feelings of desire and aversion(likes and dislikes). These feelings are caused by feelings ofdesire and aversion by the fact that you attribute a pleasurableor painful nature to objects. Thought is finite. It is inadequate toexpress even temporal processes, not to speak of the absolutewhich is inexplicable. The body with its organs is no other thanthe mind.

The thought that you hold, will manifest itself in your life. If you are courageous, cheerful, compassionate, tolerant and kind, then these qualities will manifest in your physical life. The only impurity of the mind is base thought and desire. Guard your good thoughts as an alert watchman guards the treasury. When there is not the 'I' thought then there will be no other thought. Life is an interplay of thoughts. Duality ceases when the mind stops its function. Thinking is bound by the time factor. Thinking must cease. Then alone you will attain the Timeless. Be still. Let all the waves of thought subside. In that stillness, when the mind melts, there shines the self-effulgent Atman, the pure consciousness. Watch the mind. Watch the thoughts. Pursue serenity. Make your heart a fitting abode for the Lord. Your mind must be empty of all worldly thoughts. It must be filled up with thoughts of God and with nothing else. Keep your mind filled with good, divine, sublime, lofty thoughts so that there will be no room for evil thoughts. Never speak an unnecessary word. Never allow any unnecessary or vain thought to occupy your mind.

iii. Some Facts of the Mind:

The expansion of the mind's thoughts towards the objects is bondage, while the abandoning of the Sankalpa (desire) isemancipation. Perception is the result of the conjunction of the organ of the sense and the object. The individual soul desires to see, makes an effort to see and immediately the vision is formed. The mind is alerted. The corresponding objects of all the senses are alerted. It is the mind alone which brings on pleasure and pain to itself and reaps them through its excessive inclination or aversion towards the objects. The psychological tendencies are caused by your action in this and previous lives.

Mind is a feeling. That which makes you aware of pleasure and pain is mind. Just as a minister obeys a king, the five organs of the body act in accordance with the dictates of the mind. All that man pursues in this life has no existence except in his mind, not in reality. Separateness is an illusion caused by mind. Mind is like a mirror. It collects dust while it reflects. It must be cleansed by reciting the names of the Lord. Find out the source of the mind and keep the mind there. The mind will perish (Manonasa). The mind becomes of the nature of Jnana or wisdom through efforts in spiritual direction and alsobecomes of the nature of the world through Ajnana or ignorance. If the mind is divested of the thought of 'I' then through meditation on Atman you can attain immortality and eternal bliss. If the lower mind is annihilated through the higher mind, then you will attain perennial bliss. All become subject to bondage through their own Sankalpas and Vasanas like a silk worm in its cocoon.

Like a caged lion, mind is always restless. Know the Self. The restless mind will become peaceful. The mind attains, through discrimination, the peace of the Eternal. If the mind turns its back upon discrimination, it entangles itself in the folds of Vasanas or desires. Detach your mind from the world and attach it to the All-pervading Reality called Atman or the Supreme Self. If all doubts vanish through spiritual knowledge arising through meditation on Atman or the Supreme Self, then the mind ceases to exist as it does now. If all objects which have an enchanting appearance become eyesores and present the very reverse of the former feelings then mind ceases to exist. With the destruction of mind, all the three periods of time vanishinto nothing. If the mind is purged of all its impurities, then it will become very calm and all delusions attendant with its birth and death will be destroyed.

Like one iron mould shaping another iron, the pure mind should correct and mould the impure mind. The sacred syllable OM is the bow. Brahman or the Absolute is the target. Just as the arrow becomes one with the target, so also by the practice of meditation the mind becomes united with Brahman.

MIND-THE ELIMINATION OF ITS PROPS

You have the whole menagerie within you-the lion, the tiger, the serpent, the elephant, the ape and the peacock. Bring them under your control. The beauty of the flesh is really due to the life-giving principle, Prana. The beauty is attributable to the light that emanates from Atman. The nasty body with oozing discharges from nine gutters composed of the five elements is a Jada Vastu and Apavitra. Always entertain this idea. Have a clear-cut well-defined image or picture like this. You will conquer lust by such a mental drill. If you understand the doctrine of unity in diversity, if you know there is only one matter, one energy, one mind-substance, one life, one existence, one Sat, one Reality and if you entertain always such a thought, you can control Krodha. If you remember that you are only an instrument in the hands of God, that God is everything, that God does everything, that God is just, then you can get rid of Ahankara. You can annihilate Dvesha by Pratipaksha Bhavana. Look to the brighter side of persons. Ignore the dark aspect.

Emotion is a motive power like the steam of an engine. It helps you in your evolution. Had it not been for the presence of emotion, you would have passed into a state of passivity or inertia. It gives a push for action or motion. It is a blessing. But you must not become a prey to emotions. You must not allow them to bubble out. You must purify and calm the surging emotions. You must allow them to rise slowly and subside quietly from the mind-ocean. You must keep the emotions under perfect control. Do not mistake physical sensations for higher sublime emotions. Do not be carried away by emotions. There are certain people who like to hear some new sensational events just to arouse their emotions. They live on emotions; otherwise they feel quite dull. This is a great weakness. This must be eradicated if they like to lead a calm and quiet life.

All evil qualities proceed from anger. If you control anger, all evil qualities will vanish by themselves.

Ahankara, Sankalpa, Vasana, Prana, have intimate connection with the mind. There cannot be any mind without thesefour. Prana is the life of the mind. Ahankara is the root of the mind. Sankalpas are the branches of the mind-tree. Vasana is the seed of the mind. This deep-rooted tree of Samsara which ramifies in various directions with branches full of flowers, tendrils, fruits, etc., has the mind as its root. If this root-mind is destroyed, the tree of Samsara-this tree of birth and death-will also be destroyed. Cut this root-mind with the axe of Brahma-Jnana. Chop off the branches (Sankalpas) with the knife of Viveka-Vichara.

The ever-restless mind becomes quiescent when all desires vanish. Desire raises Sankalpas (thoughts). Man performs actions for acquiring the desired objects. Thus he is caught in the wheel of Samsara. The wheel stops when the Vasanas perish.

Just as there are doors in a bungalow between the outer and inner rooms so also there are doors between the lower and the higher mind. When the mind is purified by the practice of Karma, Yoga, Tapas, right conduct or the practice of Yama, Niyama, Japa, meditation, etc., the doors between the lower and the higher mind are opened. Discrimination between the real and the unreal dawns. The eye of intuition is opened. The practitioner gets inspiration, revelation and higher Divine knowledge.

It is extremely difficult to have a calm and pure mind. But you must have such a mind, if you want to have progress in meditation, if you desire to do Nishkama Karma Yoga. Then only you will have a perfect instrument a well-controlled mind at your disposal. This is one of the most important qualifications for an aspirant. You will have to struggle hard for a long time with patience and perseverance. Nothing is impossible for a Sadhaka who has an iron will and a strong determination.

Just as soap cleanses the physical body, so also, Japa of a Mantra, Dhyana, Kirtan and practice of Yama cleanse the mind of its impurities.

PRECEPTS FOR PRACTICE OF MIND-CONTROL

The mind is weak.Thesensesarestrong.Thebondsoftemptationarestrongerstill.Inthemidstofthese three, you are tossed upanddown.SpiritualSadhanaalonecangiveyoutheinnerSantioreternalpeace.Do Japa, meditation, Kirtan,Satsangaandstudyofspiritualbooks.Thesewillhelpyouandnotthetemptations that assail you. Do not thinkoftheobjectsofthesenses.CessationfromworldlyenjoymentsisUparati.Constant practice to fix the mind inGodisSamadhana.DeepconcentrationisSamadhana.Donotallowthemindtoexternalise. This is Sama. Checkingtheexternalinstrumentsofthesense-organsisDama.

Ninetypercentperspirationandtenpercentinspirationmakeageniusorprodigy.Intelligence is nine-tenths memoryonly.Whenthesense-objectattractsyou,withdrawthemindfromtheobject.Tosee Rama or Krishna inasense-objectispossibleonlyforwell-advancedaspirants."Iamnon-doer."ThisistheBhava of a Vedantin.Thedevoteeoffersallhisactionsassacrificeuntothe Lord.Hefeelsthatheisaninstrument in the hands of the Lord(NimittaBhava).

TheLordknowswhatisbestforyou.Hemouldsyouinavarietyofwaysfor Hisunhampered play or Lila and for the attainmentofthefinalbeatitude.Thereforeresignyourself to Hissupremewillandbesatisfied with whatever thathappensandthusprepareyourselffortheattainmentofthatbalancedstate(Samata) wherein there is absence oflikesanddislikesorthepairsofoppositesandsupremepeace.

Lustdealsadeadlyblowtospiritual Sadhana.Killthislustbydiversemethods.Donotentertain lustful thoughts. Donotlookatfiguresthatcreatethementalsensationofpassion.Avoidgoingtocinemas. Do not mix with all sortsofpeoplewhotakepleasureinlustfulspeech.ThinkoftheLordwhentheideaofsexenters the mind. Pray to Himfervently.

The conception that the body is the Atman constitutes Avidya or ignorance (*Dehadishu anatmasuahamasmiityatmabuddhiravidya*).Fromitspringdesireswithregardtowhateverpromotes the well-being of thebodyandaversionwithregardtowhatevertendstoinjureit.Therefurtherarisefearand confusion when we observeanythingthreateningtodestroyit.Allthisconstitutesanendlessseriesofmanifold evils. A sage always restsinSamadhiorTuriyastate.Hehasonlyonestate,thestateofTuriyaorthefourth.Hehas none of the three states.Heneitherwakes,dreamsnorsleeps.Hehasneitherpast,norpresentnorfuture.

If youfailinkeepingyourresolves,makefreshresolves.Justasthechildfallsmanyatimewhen it tries to walk withoutthehelpofthewall,justasthenewcyclistfallsfromthecycleanumberoftimesbefore he learns to sit steadily intheseat,soalsothenewaspirantwillfailanumberoftimesinhisresolves.Hehastomake repeated attempts. Ultimatelyhewillcomeoutvictorious.Justasthetongueisnotaffectedbyghee,soalsothe skilful aspirant is notaffectedbythetemptationsoftheworld.HetakesshelterintheLord,inHisNameand grace.

Chapter Ten

SIDELIGHTS ON THE PATH OF YOGA

IMPORTANCE OF CONTINENCE

Purity is the pathway to the Kingdom of God. Therefore, be pure in thought, word and deed.

A pure heart is necessary to know the will of God. If youwish to be strong, be pure.

Brahman is Purity. You will have to attain Brahman or know Him and become one with Him through Purity. There is no other way.

Brahmacharya is purity in thought, word and deed. It includes the control of, not only the impulse of lust, but also all the other senses. Brahmacharya is an integral part of Yoga. It is an indispensable factor for divine union or blissful Samadhi.

Brahmacharya is the key to immortality. Brahmacharyenatapasa deva mrityumupaghnata-through purity and penance the gods have conquered death. Brahmacharya is real life. It bestows infinite Tejas, memory, will-power and intuitive knowledge of the Self.

Not much of spiritual progress is possible without Brahmacharya. He who lacks the power of Brahmacharya lacks strength. He does not attain spiritual progress. He leads a miserable life. He is swayed by inferiority complex. He is devoid of strength and vigour. He loses all interest in life. Excessive loss of the vital power is the cause of various diseases of the mind and body, premature old age and early death.

Lust ruins life, lustre, strength, vitality, memory, wealth, fame, holiness, peace, wisdom and devotion. Therefore, slay this lust.

There is no half-measure in the spiritual path. Perfect Brahmacharya is necessary for the attainment of Self-realisation. There is no "by and by," "little by little," "gradually," or "tomorrow" for a thirsting aspirant of the first-class type. Theseexpressions delude the aspirant. That tomorrow will nevercome. Do it now, this very second!

The illusory pleasure derived from sex-gratification is only a mere nervous sensation. A person who is a victim of lust soon finds himself in a helpless condition.

Benefits of Continence

Brahmacharya will sharpen and brighten your intellect, give you immense physical and spiritual strength and power and retentive memory. It will bestow on you illumination, great success, immortal bliss and eternal peace. Mental calm and vigour, will-power and strength, irresistible and invincible energy spring forth from within when Brahmacharya or celibacy. one practises

If you attain complete mastery over the sexual instinct, you will develop the Medha Nadi. Medha Nadi transmutes lower energies into higher, spiritual energy. You will realise God after the formation of the Medha Nadi.

If sex-energy is controlled and sublimated, it is transmuted into Ojas Sakti or spiritual energy which helps the aspirant to enter into deep meditation and Samadhi.

Mere bodily purity without the purity of heart is absolutely useless. Mental purity is of paramount importance for Self-realisation.

Brahmacharya and Stages of Life

Purity is freedom from mundane desires. Purity is the best jewel of a Yogi. It is the greatest treasure of a sage. It is the best wealth of a devotee. It is the corner-stone of the edifice of divine wisdom.

Brahmacharya is that kind of right conduct which helps the aspirant to shut out all sexual thoughts and to move towards Brahman or the Eternal, and rest peacefully forever therein.

Brahmacharya is applicable to students, householders, Vanaprasthis and the hermits, with different emphasis. In the three orders of life-Brahmacharya (period of study before marriage), Vanaprastha (retirement after household life) and Sannyasa celibacy should be observed.

A householder who is regulated in sex-gratification, and leads a disciplined life, practises the rules of Brahmacharya in his own way.

For the vast majority of people it is proper to pass through the four orders of life, namely, Brahmacharya, Grihastha (household life) Vanaprastha and the life of renunciation. But a sincere spiritual aspirant can embrace Sannyasa immediately after student life, and be a Brahmachari throughout.

Brahmacharya for the Youth

O fair youth! A glorious future awaits you. Forget the past: Observe Brahmacharya from today. Even though you might not have been a Brahmachari, do not be disheartened. You can resolve to be a Brahmachari right from this very moment.

Do not deviate from the path of Brahmacharya. Give up entirely all evil habits. Live in the company of pure souls or good people. Keep yourself ever busy in doing some useful work. Do not waste your time in useless company or idle gossip; do not lead an idle life.

Take light diet. Do not overload the stomach at night. Take pure, wholesome, nourishing food. Pray to the Lord regularly with a contrite heart. Take cold-water bath every day. Lead a well-regulated life. Study Gita, Upanishads, Bhagavata and Ramayana. Study the lives of great Brahmacharis like Hanuman, Bhishma and others. Have daily Satsanga. Get up at 4 a.m., and meditate on the Lord.

Give up onion, garlic, meat, fish and wine. Have early dinner, which should be very light. Do prayer, Kirtan and meditation before you go to sleep. Do Japa and prayer soon after you get up from bed.

Unless you are inspired by spiritual ideals, it is difficult to keep the sexual instinct in check.

Watch your mind carefully. Practise Vichara (discriminative enquiry) when the mind drags you along the wrong channel. Freely admit your faults to the Lord during prayers and appeal to Him for strength to conquer evil impulses. The Lord will surely help you and guide you on your path.

Brahmacharya and Different Paths

Through the practice of Brahmacharya man can get over all the miseries of mundane life, and attain health, strength, peace of mind, endurance, bravery, material progress, clear brain, g gantic will-power, bold understanding, clear memory, abundant energy, power to face difficulties in the daily battle of life and immortality.

By the practice of various Asanas, especially SiddhasanaSirshasana and Sarvangasana, a Hatha Yogi transmutes his seminal energy into Ojas Sakti. By the practice of Nava-Vidha Bhakti, namely, Sravana, Kirtan, Smarana, Padasevana Archana, Vandana, Sakhya, Dasya and Atma-Nivedana, cluding Japa, a Bhakta destroys the impurity of his mind and fixes it on God.

By the practice of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama. Pratyahara, Dharana and Dhyana, a Raja Yogi conquers lust and attains Kaivalya. A Jnana Yogi becomes pure by Viveka Vichara, Vairagya, Sama, Dama and Titiksha. Be ever vigilant. Constantly think on the sexless Atman. Destroy the sexual Vasanas. See the Atman in all. Reject the names and forms, and think of the underlying essence, i.e., Satchidananda.

Sidelights on the Path of Yoga

Anything that brings impure thoughts in the mind is, in essence, a bad company. Do not resort to the company of worldly persons. You should be away from the danger-zone. The magnetic aura and the powerful thought-currents of developed souls produce a tremendous influence on the minds of lustful people. Try to have as much Satsanga as possible.

Avert sexual thoughts by entertaining sublime divinethoughts. Keep the mind busy and fully occupied. Render yourwill pure, strong and irresistible. Brahmacharya is not only sexual abstinence but also purity of life. It is the corner-stone ofethical idealism. It is the basis of all good principles. It servesas life's directive and as a master-key to open the realms of Divine Bliss.

Who Is ABrahmachari?

A Brahmachari is one who is attempting to realise Brahman by leading a life of absolute purity. That which is thought, comes out of the mouth. That which the mouth speaks, the organs of action do. That is the reason why it is said in the Vedas: "Let my mind think of only auspicious things." Ever entertain sublime, divine thoughts. The old evil sexual thoughts will gradually vanish, just as the old nail in a plank is driven by inserting over it a new nail.

It is with the weapon of Brahmacharya that Hanuman became a Mahavir. It is with this weapon that he acquired unsurpassed strength and valour. The great Bhishma, the grandfather of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, conquered death by Brahmacharya. It is Lakshmana, the ideal Brahmachari, who conquered Indrajit of inestimable prowess.

Pure water, pure air, wholesome food, physical exercise, outdoor games, walking, rowing, swimming-all these contribute to the maintenance of good health, strength and high standard of vitality. There are, indeed, many ways to gain health and strength. But Brahmacharya is the most important of all. It is the substratum for a life of peace in the Atman. It is a potent weapon for waging war against the internal Asuras-Kama, Krodha and Lobha.

Ojas Sakti is spiritual energy that Yogis store up in the brain through the practice of Brahmacharya. By sublime thoughts, meditation, Japa, worship, Asanas and Pranayamas, the sexual energy can be transmuted into Ojas Sakti.

Dietetics

Purity of food brings purity of mind. That power which connects the body and the mind is present in the food that we take. Various kinds of food have different effects on the mind. Pure food makes the mind and the body strong and steady. So, it is absolutely necessary that one should take pure, Sattvic food. Food has a very close connection with Brahmacharya.

A glutton can never become a true Brahmachari. Contro of the tongue is a sine qua non if you want to observe Brahmacharya. There is a close and intimate connection be tween the tongue and the organ of generation, They are sisterorgans, since the source is the same. If the tongue is stimulated by Rajasic food, the reproductive organs also get excited. The food of a Brahmachari must be simple, bland, spiceless, non-irritating and non-stimulant. Moderation in food is absolutely necessary. Fruits are highly beneficial. Dietetic restrictions and fasting are very useful auxiliaries in the control of the carnal mind for the practice of Brahmacharya.

The senses of man are very turbulent. The powerful tubercle bacillus that causes consumption is attacked on all sides by the doctor by various drugs. So also the senses must be controlled by various methods such as fasting, restriction in diet, Pranayama, Japa, Kirtan, meditation, Pratyahara or abstraction of mind from the objects, Dama or self-restraint, Asanas, Bandhas and Mudras.

The true Brahmachari shines with Brahmic aura in his face. Brahmacharya is the bright light that shines in the house of the human body. It is the fully blossomed flower of life around which the bees of strength, patience, knowledge, purity and courage move about humming hither and thither.

Blessed is the Brahmachari who has taken the vow of celibacy for the whole life. Twice blessed is that Brahmachari who is sincerely struggling to destroy lust and attain perfect purity. Thrice blessed is that Brahmachari who has completely rooted out lust and has attained Self-realisation. Glory to such exalted Brahmacharis! May their blessings be upon you all!

THOU ART THE IMMORTAL SPIRIT

Blessed Soul, thou art not this physical body. Thou art the immortal Atman. Thou art the sexless reality. Thou art the son of the King of kings, the Emperor of emperors, the Brahman of the Upanishads, the Atman who dwells in the chambers of your heart. Act as such. Feel as such. Claim your birthright from this very second. Feel, and mentally assert your real nature, realise thus, not from tomorrow or the day after, but right now, from this very second. Tat Tvam Asi, O Niranjan, thou art the immortal Self.

Brother, courage is thy birthright, not fear. Peace is thy divine heritage, not restlessness. Immortality is thy birthright, not morality; strength, not weakness; health, not disease; bliss, not sorrow; knowledge, not ignorance. You are the architect of your own fate and fortune. You are the master of your own destiny. You can do and undo things. You can attain the Highest by right thinking, right feeling and right action. You can break old morbid habits by the power of your will. You can destroy wrong Samskaras, unholy desires, wrong imaginations. You can build new habits of your own. You can change your nature. You can build up a beautiful character. You can move the whole world by your spiritual force. You can elevate others also to the status of divinity.

Draw Strength From Within

Rely on your own self. Do not be over-credulous. Believe not in any dogmas. Hear the inner voice of the soul or the promptings of the pure conscience. Be not a slave. Do not sell your liberty. You are ever the immortal soul. Destroy the inferiority complex. Draw power and courage and strength from within. Be ever free. Have no blind faith. Reason out carefully, and accept everything as it is. Do not be carried away by blind, surging emotions. Subdue them. Do not be intolerant. Expand your heart. There is a vast magazine of power and knowledge within you. It needs only an ignition. Then the whole mysteries of the Self will be revealed unto you. The darkness of ignorance will be dispelled by the light of the knowledge of the Self. Constant meditation on the Atman is the master-key to open the realms of knowledge. Taste the Vedantic nectar and attain immortality, eternal bliss and perennial joy. This is the goal of human life This is the end and aim of your existence.

Try to lead a life of non-attachment; discipline your mind slowly and gradually. No one is free from pains, diseases, troubles and difficulties. You will have to rest in your own Svaroopa (real nature), the blissful Atman, the source and support of your life. You will have to remember your own divine nature. Only then will you gain inner strength to face the difficulties of life. Only then will you have a balanced mind. Then you will not be affected by external morbid influences, and unpleasant, discordant vibrations. Regular meditation in the mornings will give you a new strength, a feeling of inner life, perennial joy and unalloyed bliss. Practise this. Feel this despite your adverse and stormy conditions. Gradually you will have to grow spiritually. You will attain Self-realisation eventually.

All Is Lord's Will

Your present suffering is only Karmic purgation. It has come to make you remember God more and more, to install mercy in your heart, to strengthen you and to enable you to develop the power of endurance. Kunti prayed to God to give her always adversity, so that she could remember Him at all times. Bhaktas rejoice in suffering more. Disease, pain and affliction are messengers from God. A Bhakta welcomes them with a cheerful countenance. He never grumbles. He says: "I am Thine, my Lord. Thou doest everything for my good."

Where then is the room for lamentation and despair, O Niranjan? You are dear to the Lord. That is the reason why He gives you troubles. If He wants to take anyone to His side, He takes away ease and mundane happiness. Therefore, face everything with a smile, a cheerful countenance. Understand His mysterious ways. See God in everything, in every face.

The all-merciful God resides in the chambers of your heart. Remember this again and again. He is very close to you. You have forgotten Him. But He still cares for you. Troubles are His blessings in disguise. I say this again. He wants to mould your body and mind as fit instruments for His unhampered Play.He knows better what is

good for you than you yourself do Keep down the load which you are carrying on your shoulders unnecessarily on account of your egotism. Give up your self-centered responsibilities and be at perfect ease. Have unswerving faith in Him alone. Do total, unreserved self-surrender. Run to Him now. He is ever waiting with outstretched hands to welcome you. He will do everything for you. Believe me; take my word for it. Open your heart to Him freely like a child. All miseries will come to an end. Say unto Him at least once with sincerity: "I am Thine, my Lord; all is Thine; Thy will be done.

The gulf of separation will vanish now. All miseries, troubles, worries and diseases will melt away like the snow-flakes before the warmth-giving sun. Feel that the whole world is your body, your own home. Melt and destroy all barriers that separate man from man. Develop all-inclusive love. Separation is death. Unity is eternal life. Feel that the body is a moving temple of God. May that self-effulgent Brahman guide you in all your activities!

WHEEL OF LAW

The law of causation is a universal law that keeps up the harmony and the logical order of the universe, and all the phenomena of Nature are governed by this one basic law. Man's deeds are as much subject to this law as the events and occurrences on this physical plane. Karma is a Sanskrit term that comes from the root 'Kri,' meaning to act, and signifies action or deed. Any physical or mental action is Karma. Reaction that follows an action is also Karma. It is a broad term. Attraction, repulsion, gravitation, breathing, talking, walking, seeing, eating, feeling. thinking all the actions of the body, mind and senses are all Karma. Karma includes both cause and effect. All other laws of nature are subordinate to this fundamental law. The sun shines, the fire burns, the rivers flow, the wind blows, the buds blossom in harmony and in strict obedience to this law of cause and effect. This law operates everywhere in the physical and astral planes. No phenomenon can escape from the operation of this mighty law.

Cause and Effect

The seed has its cause in the tree and the seed itself becomes in turn the cause for the tree. The cause is found in the effect and the effect in the cause. The effect is similar to the cause. This is the universal chain of cause and effect which has no end. No link in the chain is necessary. The world runs on this fundamental, vital law; it is inexorable and immutable.

The scientist carefully observes the phenomena of nature and tries to find out the exact cause for all that takes place in nature. The astronomer sits in his observatory and watches the map of the heavens, studies the stars and planets carefully and the phenomena that take place in the worlds without. He tries to find out the exact causes that bring about the phenomena. The philosopher sits in a contemplative mood and tries to find out the cause for this world, the cause for the pains and miseries of life and the cause for the phenomena of birth and death.

No event can occur without having a particular, definite cause at the back of it. There is no such thing as blind chanceor accident. The cause is hidden or unknown if you are not able to trace out the cause for a particular accident.

All the physical and mental forces in nature obey this law of cause and effect. Law and the law-giver are one. Nature and Nature's laws are one. The laws of gravitation, cohesion, adhesion, attraction and repulsion, the law of likes and dislikes, the laws of relativity, contiguity, association and dissociation, on physical and mental planes, operate in strict accordance with this law of cause and effect. From the vibration of an electron to the revolution of a mighty planet-every event is the effect of some invisible force that works in happy concord and harmony with the law of cause and effect.

As You Sow, So You Reap

Events come out in succession and order. There is perfect harmony. The child grows, attains boyhood and adolescence, becomes an adult, marries, has children, grows old and dies. A seed sprouts and comes out with leaves, stem, twigs, flowers and brings forth fruits and seeds in due season. A seed from a fruit brings out a tree like the parent. The seed of a mango-tree cannot give rise to a Jambu tree. How is it that only a mango tree comes out of a mango seed, a Jambu tree from a Jambu seed, an apple tree from an apple seed?

There is some mysterious power that is working behind these phenomena. That mysterious all-pervading power or intelligence is God. He who sows paddy, reaps paddy; he who sows green gram reaps green gram. He who sows oranges reaps oranges. He who sows paddy cannot reap oranges. Man sows the seed of that which he has to reap. If a man does bad deeds, he has to reap bad fruits. He who does virtuous deeds and actions reaps good fruits. One reaps the fruits according to his Karmas or actions.

There Is No Accident

How is it that one man is a king, another is a beggar; one is a genius, another is a fool; one man is very healthy, another is always ailing; one man is wicked, another is saintly; one dies at the age of ten, another dies at the age of ninety? Is it due to accident? No, it cannot be. The operating cause is Karma. He who has done Tapas, meditation, Satsanga and service of thepeople in his previous birth, is born as a Yogi or as a saint in this birth. He who has done vicious actions in his former birth is born as a wicked man. He who has done a lot of charity in his previous birth is born as a king. He who was miserly is born as a beggar. It is only the theory of Karma that can explain things satisfactorily.

Nescience, mundane desire and selfish action arethethreeknotswhichtieamantothewheelof Samsara. The last two are the effects of the first. Man firstentertainsadesiretohaveablanket.Hesays,"The winter is very severe now. I desire to get a blanket." Thenhebeginstothinkwherehecangetit?Thenhedecides that he can get it in a shop. He then takes some money, walkstoashop,andpurchasesablanket.Hehadfirsta desire. Then a thought came in. Then there was the actionofmovingandpurchasing.Thethreethings,thought, desire and action, always go together. Desire and thoughtareinternalacts.Theactionisexternal.

Entertain Good Desires

If a man entertainsgooddesires,hegetsgoodideasanddoesgoodactions.Ifamancherishesevildesires,he develops evil ideasanddoesevilactions.Itisthethoughtsthatdevelopthecharacteroftheman.Ifonecultivates thoughts of mercy,love,tolerance,generosity,heexhibitsthesevirtuesinhischaracterandbehaviourtowards others in society.Ifonesowsthevirtueofmercy,hereapsaharvestofmercy.Hebecomesaverymercifulman.If he sows cruelty,hereapsaharvestofcruelty.Hedoescrueldeeds.Onecanchangehishabits,thoughtand character by developingtheircounterparts:goodhabitsandgoodthoughts.Itisthoughtthatmovethebodyto action. There isthoughtbehindeveryaction.Thereisadesirebehindeverythought.

Do notallowdesirestohaveswayoveryou.Donotbecarriedawayeasilybyallsortsofdesiresthrough emotion. Whenadesiremanifests,cogitateandthinkalittle.Reasonoutwhetherthisparticulardesiretowardsa particular objectwillbringmaximumhappinessandminimumpain.Ifitisotherwise,rejectitruthlessly.Donottry to fulfil it. You mustcontroldesirebythought.Youmustnotallowadesiretooverruleyourthought.Youmust slowly gain strengthtocontrolthedesire.Adesirewhencontrolledbecomestransmutedintowill.Youwillnow gain the will-force.Manypeoplebecomeapreytotheirdesiresandaretossedabouthitherandthitherhelplessly like a straw in thewind.Thisisreallyaverygreatpity.Thatmanwhohasgotcontroloverdesiresandthoughtsis really a powerfulandhappyman.

Learn tobecomewise.Learntodiscriminate.Learntocontrolthoughtsanddesires.Watchyourthoughts very carefully. Donotallowanyevilthoughttoenterthegatesofyourmentalpower-house.Nipitinthebud. Always entertainholythoughtsandsublimedesires.Renounceunholythoughtsandunholydesires.Developthe urge for Self-realisation.Thisonestrongholydesirewillannihilateallotherworldlydesires.Unerstandwellthe theory of Karma.CuttheknotsofAvidyaandrealisetheSatchidanandaAtman.

YOGA FOR PEACE

Real peace is absolute serenity or tranquillity, wherein all the mental modifications, Sankalpas, thoughts, imaginations, whims, fancies, moods, impulses and emotions, instincts, etc., cease entirely, and the individual soul rests in his own native pristine glory. It is not a temporary state of mental quietitude which worldly people speak of in common parlance when they retire for a short time in a solitary bungalow in a forest for a little rest

Peace is the Turiya state or the fourth condition of super-consciousness. Peace is in the realm of infinite bliss, eternal life and eternal sunshine, where the three kinds of suffering, including cares, worries, anxieties and fear, which torment the soul of man, dare not enter, and where all distinctions of caste, creed and colour vanish altogether in the oneness of Divine Love and where all desires and cravings find their real satiety. Peace is in the holy life, in the pure spirit, absolute Consciousness, Brahman or highest Self.

Peace Is Within

Peace is within. Search for peace within the chambers of your heart through one-pointed concentration and meditation. If you do not find peace there, you will not find it anywhere else. Remember, dear friends, that the goal of Life, the summum bonum of existence, is the attainment of peace through Self-realisation. God is Santi Svarupa (embodiment of peace). The Srutis emphatically declare: "Ayam Atma Santo-this Atman is Silence."

Desire is the greatest enemy of peace. Desire causes distractions of various sorts. There is no peace for him who has no power of concentration and steadiness of will. There can be no happiness for the unpeaceful. In that supreme peace all pains, sorrows, miseries and tribulations vanish for ever.

Try to give up all desires, cravings, longings, egotism and "mineness." You will get peace. The peace of the Eternal lies near those who know themselves, who are dissociated from desire and passion, are subdued in nature, and have controlover thoughts. One who is endowed with supreme faith, and who has mastery over his senses gets quickly supreme peace.

Push Forward

Dear brothers! Children of Immortality! Plod on, Push on. Do not look backward. Forget the past. Forget the body and the world. But forget not your Source. A glorious, bright future is awaiting you. Purify. Serve. Love. Give. Live in Om. Sing Om Chant Om. Feel always and everywhere the indwelling, all-pervading presence of the Divine. Realise the Self. Rest in the magnanimous ocean of Peace, in the stupendous sea of Stillness. Drink the nectar of Immortality. May the indwelling Presence be your centre, ideal and goal! May joy, bliss, immortality, peace, poise, glory and splendour abide in you for ever!

Blessed Soul! Stand up now like an undaunted spiritual soldier in the Adhyatmic battlefield. Become a spiritual hero of great intrepidity and unique chivalry. Get over obstacles fearlessly, one by one, and manifest divine glory, splendour, purity and sanctity. Wait patiently with a calm and serene mind for results. Do not be hasty, rash and impetuous. Allow due time for regeneration and renovation. Nil desperandum-never despair. Wear the coat of arms of Vairagya. Wield the shield of Viveka. Hold the banner of faith. March forward boldly and cheerfully, chanting the name of the Lord. Stop not till you drink the elixir of Immortality to your heart's content. Stop not, dear aspirants, till you enter the immortal realms of eternal sunshine, undecaying beauty. unfading ecstasy, supreme bliss, infinite joy, unalloyed felicity and unbroken peace.

This is your final destination. You can take eternal rest now. This is your goal. This is your highest aim and purpose of life. Rest now in everlasting peace, friends! Good-bye unto all miseries. Share this rare panacea with your brothers. Elevate them. This noble and stupendous selfless work is awaiting you now. Fulfil the Divine Will and become a Buddha of undying fame.Salutations unto you all!

ATTAIN PEACE BY SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT

People cry for peace. But where to get it and how? They can get it in their hearts through association with spiritual teachers and constant meditation on the inner spirit. Peace can be found within. You certainly cannot find it in external objects. Wealth, women, children, property, comfortable homes cannot give you everlasting peace. Look within. Realise your oneness with the one supreme Intelligence that dwells within the chambers of your heart.

There is restlessness all around. Selfishness, greed, wrath, lust, anger, jealousy and hatred are polluting the atmosphere and creating discord, disharmony and unrest. Side by side, a few saintly souls are working silently for bringing about harmony and peace, for eradicating the Avidya, the root-cause of human suffering, and for infusing devotion into the hearts of people.

Mysterious is this universe. Still more mysterious is the silent working of the unseen God. There are good and bad everywhere. In this mundane world, nothing is always good and no one is bad for ever. There is chance for redemption even for the worst type of man.

Regenerate Yourself

If you annihilate selfishness, greed and egotism, nature will aid you. You will have to cooperate with nature; then nature will carry your burden of life on its head. Go against nature, and you will come to grief. Act judiciously, obey the laws of nature, and you can remain quite at ease. You will be free from cares, worries, anxieties and fears. The individual will would unite with the cosmic will. Then there will be no obstacles in your way. Whosoever makes surrender of his selfish aims to the will of the Lord, will enjoy supreme peace and perennial bliss.

It is useless to talk of the cessation of discord in society. while you are full of jealousy and hatred. Remove the discordant vibrations from within first, through meditation and regen eration of the lower nature. Let every individual try this Individuals constitute society and the world. Lead an ideal lifeof peace. Kill ruthlessly suspicion, prejudice of all sorts of envy. jealousy, selfishness and greed for power and possessions Lead a simple life. Practise daily introspection and concentration, and establish peace in your heart. Then it will automatipeace to the whole world through your example of inner attainment.

The glory of religion will be lost if it cannot produce men of peace and goodwill, or those who lead a life of renunciation and divine contemplation. It is these people who uphold the religions of the world and bring peace and happiness to the people. They are the messengers of divine wisdom and peace. They are the fountain-heads of the knowledge of the Self and heavenly wisdom. They heal the sick, comfort the forlorn, nurse the bed-ridden. They bring hope to the hopeless, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak, courage to the timid, by radiating the rays of peace and wisdom which they have attained. Be like them.

Be Practical

Mere study of religious texts or scriptures will not help much in cultivating the unity or oneness of life. Mere study will lead one to dry, idle talk and discussion. There will be no hope for such a man of dry intellect to cultivate the unity of consciousness, unless he destroys ruthlessly all sorts of hatred, petty-mindedness, crookedness, the idea of superiority and all barriers that separate man from man. He must do incessant, protracted service of humanity with the right mental attitude or divine Bhava. Practical Vedanta is what is wanted. There are only dry discussions and meaningless fights over the lesser factors of various religions.

The central teaching of the Gita is Self-realisation, in and through the world. To serve humanity and to think of God, while performing one's duties in the world amidst various activities is superior to a cave life. Selfless work is Yoga. Real spiritual progress starts with selfless service to humanity.

Importance of Service

Serve everyone with intense love, without the idea of agency, without expectation of fruits, i.e., reward or even appreciationKeep up your poise amidst the toil and turmoil of the world without consideration of success or failure, gain or loss, victory or defeat, respect or disrespect, pleasure or pain. Have your mind firmly rooted in the Self amidst all activities.

Even if people scoff at you, revile, or taunt you, be indifferent. Work elevates when done in the right spirit. That aspirant who keeps up his meditation while performing actions is a powerful Yogi indeed. He has a different mind altogether. He can change the destiny of those around him.

This world is in dire need of true, ideal aspirants who will serve the country and humanity and inspire people through the examples of their illustrious personalities. It is they who can establish peace on earth. O aspirants! You must become the torchbearers of Truth, the corner-stones of the spiritual structure of society and the pillars of the eternal religion of love, goodwill and peace.

Pray: "O compassionate Lord! Grant us eternal peace, purity and strength to serve the country and humanity. May we become desireless. May we all work together harmoniously, imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice, for the well-being and solidarity of the world. May we share what we have with others. May we develop cosmic love and universal brotherhood. May we all work disinterestedly with our minds fixed at Thy Lotus Feet." batindto

May Peace abide in all!

Chapter Eleven

UNIVERSAL RELIGION OF YOGA

FOUNDATIONOF RELIGION

Religion should produce a living influence on the heart andlife of a person. It should afford spiritual food for the mind. It should transform man into divinity. It should meltand purify the dross of ignorance.

The foundation of religion is faith. Its superstructure is Self-realisation. Its walls are holiness, truthfulness, purity, and non-injury. Discrimination, dispassion, serenity, self-restraint, one-pointedness of mind and holy aspiration are the bricks. Love is the cement.

Social customs and conventions have been wrongly given the status of religion by ignorant people. These social customs and conventions are changing from time to time, according to the needs of society or the exigencies of the occasion. Even though one evokes the sanction of religion in order to enforce them, the true nature of religion is quite different. You cannot call social customs and conventions the fabric of religion. Religion is eternal and unchanging. If you strictly follow it, it will lead you to eternal bliss and freedom from the trammels of birth and death.

Unity Behind Diversity

All religions ultimately point out the path to God-realisation or perfection or freedom. All religions are basically the same. Real religion is one. It is the realisation of oneness or unity of the Self. It is the religion of love. All religions are the different versions of the one religion of love and unity. There is no religion which is devoid of love.

Man forgets all about religion on account of ignorance or lust for power and greed. He becomes irreligious. So he comes down to the level of a brute. He loses all sense of morality. He does havoc. He creates mischief. He lives a life of vice and dies like a worm.

If man always remembers the essential unity of all souls, if he is religious, if he has really understood that all beings are the children of one God, if he has knowledge of the law of Karma, the teachings of saints, prophets and seers, if he has under stood the illusory, impermanent nature of this world-he will never think of doing any harm to others in thought, word and deed. He will never think of aggrandizement. He will be ever leading the life divine and be happy for ever. He will be ever serving others. He will contribute all his efforts towards the happiness of others.

What Is Religious Life?

Irreligious life is the cause of wars and riots. Irreligious life is the cause of restlessness, power-politics, party-politics, division separation, murder, arson and all sorts of disgraceful, abominable, heaven-closing, brutal acts.

A truly religious man is a veritable blessing on this earth. He is a cementing, synthetic force. He is all love. His heart is filled with mercy, kindness and affection. He is a blessed peace-maker. He is the really good man.

Quoting scriptures will not make one religious. Church-going, without following the teachings of the scriptures, standing on the head for three hours, or ringing bells in the temple, without removing selfishness and narrow-mindedness, will not make one religious. Religious life is a life of rigorous discipline. It is the annihilation of the lower self and the development of a rich inner life of fullness in the Eternal.

If f you take away religion, man would live for no real purpose. There is no living without religion. It is only religion that makes existence valuable and fills the mind with love, devotion, serenity and cheerfulness. True religion shows its influence on every part of your conduct and makes your life sublime and divine. Religion is the life that links man with the Creator.

Greatest of All Blessings

Religion is the foundation of society, the source of all goodness and happiness, the basis of virtue and prosperity of the individual and, through the individual, of the nation. Civilisation, law, order, morality and all that elevates man and fosters peace in the world are the fruits of the practice of religion.

Religion teaches men their close relationship with one another and produces in them the dawn of divine consciousness. It generates in them vigorous, sublime thoughts. The spirit of true religion should be mixed up with your very being and daily life. It will then give you security, perennial joy and a new hope when all mundane hopes fail you.

Religious life is the greatest of all blessings. It lifts man from the mire of worldliness, impurity and infidelity. Intellect is vain if it is not enriched through experience attained by the practice of religion. If you live in accordance with the rules of religion, you will attain wisdom, immortality, everlasting peace and eternal bliss. You will become wise, good and glorious.

Religion is the supreme home of undying peace. It is the goal to which all things tend. It is the impregnable citadel of virtue, purity and ever-lasting felicity. It is an imperishable fortress which cannot be destroyed by any amount of atheism.

Religion is not a dogma. It is not merely a belief, or emotional attitude. It is not merely a little prayer said while in agony. It is pre-eminently a holy life in the everlasting Silence. It explains to the ignorant the nature of the Unseen and shows the way to realise God.

Real Religion

Real religion is above the mind and the senses. Real religion is above ceremonials and rituals. Real religion begins when one has transcended the trappings of petty customs, manners and conventions, without violating the decencies of life. Real religion is eternal life in the immortal Soul. Philosophy is the rational aspect of religion, and religion is the practical aspect of philosophy.

Bhakti is the basis of all religious life. Bhakti destroys Vasanas and egotism. Bhakti elevates the mind to magnanimous heights. Bhakti is the master-key to open the chambers of wisdom. Bhakti culminates in Jnana. Bhakti begins with two and ends in one. Those who fight on the point as to which is superior, Bhakti or Jnana, are groping in the darkness. They have not understood the real Tattva. Para Bhakti and Jnana are one.

Philosophers, prophets, saints, thinkers, Acharyas and all great religious leaders of the world have tried to explain the relation of man and God and the universe. Various schools of phllosophy and different kinds of religious beliefs have come into existence on account of various explanations given by different philosophers and diverse religious needs of the times.

Metaphysical Thoughts

The three schools of Hindu metaphysical thought are Dualism (Dvaita). Qualified Monism (Visishtadvaita) and Monism (Advaita). They are all stages on the way to the ultimate Truth. Though apparently antagonistic, they are complementary to one another. These stages are harmoniously arranged in a graded series of spiritual experiences, though one need not pass through all of them, Dualism, qualified monism, pure monism, all culminate eventually in the Vedantic realisation of the Absolute.

Nothing has been of so much controversy and heated discussion in Hindu philosophy as the questions; "Whether the world is real or unreal, whether the world exists or not? If it exists, what is the nature of its existence? If it does not exist, 'why' and 'how' do we perceive it?" These are problems which have been exercising the seeking minds from time immemorial. Sri Gaudapada says: "There is no world in the three periods of time. Sri Sankara says: "The world is an illusion. It is all Brahman. Brahman alone exists." Others say: "World is as real as we are. In the relative state of experience, it is real; in the absolute state, its existence is invalid."

Different stand-points are needed to suit different types of minds. An aspirant with a well-developed, subtle, sharp and one-pointed mind can grasp the highest teaching of Sri Gaudapada. Sri Ramanuja's teaching is suitable for the average type of aspirant who cannot grasp the theory of illusion all at once. You will have to say to a neophyte that the world is real. He will be able to comprehend the theory of illusion after he has attained a high state of evolution and completely annihilated his lower nature.

Common Ringing Note

The essentials or fundamentals of all religions are very similar. They have a common ringing note. The noble eight-fold path corresponds to the Sermon on the Mount of Lord Jesus or the practice of Yama-Niyama of the Raja Yogins or the Sadhana-Chatushtaya of the Vedantins. Every religion shows the various paths to God-realisation.

The roads are different, but the destination is the same. The most important thing is that one should practise what one says and believes in.

Every religion agrees: "One should speak the truth, cultivate purity, practise self-restraint, love one's fellow-beings, and observe religious disciplines and pray." These are the fundamentals of all religions.

An intolerant man cannot attain God-realisation. As his intellect becomes callous on account of intolerance, he cannot grasp the truth. All prophets are the messengers of God. They are great Yogis and realised souls who have had divine intuitive perception of God. Each prophet helped mankind by the dissemination of knowledge and founded the religion which he thought most suited to the people among whom he lived.

Beloved friends! Behold the unity in all religions. He who knows the real Tattva, who has grasped the essence of all religions, will never have condemnatory attitude. May you all understand the essential unity of all religions!

PERCEPTION OF THE UNDERLYING ESSENCE

You must be able to differentiate the essentials from the non-essentials in religion and philosophy, through the power of pure reason or discrimination. You will have to look to the underlying basic principles and transcend the non-essentials.

There are the four main paths-Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. These four paths are designed to suit the different kinds of temperaments-active, devotional, mystic and rational. A man of active temperament may remain in the world, lead the life of a householder and do Nishkama Karma Yoga and realise God as Raja Janaka and others did if he is of a mystic or devotional or rational temperament, he may lead a life of the respective mode, either in the world or as a renunciate.

A man may dress in simple clothing in any way he likes. He may eat simple food and have his hair in any shape he likes, These have nothing to do with meditation or religion. What is wanted is sincerity of purpose. There must also be purity of heart and control over the mind and the senses.

Be catholic and liberal in your views. Expand. Ignore trifles. Rise above all petty customs, narrow ceremonies, 'touchism,' 'kitchenism' and 'markism.' Look into the inner fundamentals. Practise something substantial, and then talk about the rightness or wrongness of this or that. Be practical. Do not be a hypocrite.

Hidden Truth

The truth or the inner essence is hidden by its outward appearance. To perceive the inner truth one should have observation with right discernment and impartial inquiry. Sincere inquiry into the true implication of religion is conspicuous by its absence. Thus religion, far from being rightly understood in its true light, has come to be misunderstood and sometimes dangerously misused.

Universality is the greatest characteristic of true religion, and it cannot lie in the rituals of any particular aspect of religious life, though it does not mean that they should be overlooked. One could follow one's traditional religion and yet have the universal idealism of the basic truth in all religions. Different religious beliefs are the varying processes of the development and consummation of a fundamental and universal urge to wards the one infinite source and origin of all life.

It is the concern of religion to eliminate the evil in man's personality, to develop in himself all that is sublime good, auspicious and beautiful. Religion does this by first laying down for the seeker the practice of the "good life." Moral rectitude and ethical perfection form the universal basis of every religion

The conquest of brute passions and purification of the lower nature are further aspects of the universal prevalence in the true religious life. Real religion awakens man to the Consciousness of the unity of all existence or the perception of the spiritual essence that alone is the linking factor in all. The craving for knowledge, for undiminishing joy and abiding peace is inherent in every human being. To bestow upon man the attainment of this knowledge and bliss is the main concern of religion.

When religion is thus perceived in its true essence, then the Christian, the Muslim, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Jain and the Parsee will feel themselves not as any particular religionists, but as brother-souls proceeding together in perfect harmony along the pathway to perfection and blessedness.

Let not personal bias, force of convention, or opinion of fanatic or dogmatic persons restrict your vision into a narrow view of religion.

The World-Stage

The world is a vast stage, where man plays his role during his sojourn here. This life is only an act in the stage of becoming; here many parts are played, and no part in itself is complete and enough to give the character of wholeness to the play.

Every actor in the world-stage should behave in such a way that he does not portray himself as an unrelated, independent personality, but endeavour to be an integral part of the entire play. This behaviour of the actor, fitted to the wholeness of the play, should give him a dramatic integration, and unite all actors to the whole in a universal spirit of spiritual awareness.

The Dharma of man is his religion which binds him to the whole, which shows that he is a part of the whole, trying to abide by the law of the whole and aiming at fulfilling the purpose of the whole; for, the whole is the truth, and the good of one included in it as its constituent can never exist independent of the whole.

Man can never live without God, for God is the whole and man is only a part. Man's religion is his Dharma, and ultimately the Dharma can be, in its real sense, only one, for its goal is one.

There is only one God, the indubitable Self of all beings; there is one ultimate law, the relentless law of cause and effect; there is one fundamental religion, the indispensable religion of Self-realisation.

PRACTICAL RELIGION OF YOGA

-According to Swami Sivananda-

Religion has various definitions, though ultimately it means "that which enables one to be united with one's original source." The goal is the same, though the paths leading to it might vary. Religious prophets in different ages have given many external shapes to religion (religio loci), conditioned by the traditional background of the people, among whom they lived, and also the prevalent need of the day. Albeit religion is primarily a cohesive factor in the fabric of society, "that which holds the community together," it is individually a means for the practical expression of spiritual life.

Concept of Religion

Physical urges, the impulses of the senses, for example, the natural law that dictates the preservation of the body and its perpetuation through the propagation of the species, may be predominant in the physical life of man, but he has also a deep-rooted inner urge which the senses or the objects of the world cannot satisfy, and which can be satiated only in something that is infinite, transcendental, beyond the gamut of mundane propensities. People have given the appellations-God, the ultimate Reality, the Noumenon, the Thing-in-Itself, to the goal of this inner quest. Religions are but basically the various forms of this process of the realisation of the ultimate.

Life being matter bound, the human mind being conditioned by material perception, the individual soul being wrapped up in the five sheaths of existence, it is natural that this inner quest has to take into consideration the physical world and man's relationship to it. The scriptures say that to realise the supreme Reality, even the gods, or the higher beings from the astral world, will have to be born in this world of matter in human form. This world is thus a vast school for the highest realisation, or the attainment of the ultimate goal of all life, or reunion with one's original source. Once embodied in a physical form, no one can escape this world. Even if man runs away to a cave in the Himalayas or plunges into the heart of aforest, still the world is with him; for he cannot leave his mind apart, and the mind is world.

Practical Religion

Thus the spiritual quest of life is in and through the world. That is why Hindu religion defines Dharma or religion as Duty God-realisation is the highest duty of man. It is not a duty that is apart from the world, though it implies renunciation of worldly attachments and worldliness. It is Dharma or duty in relation to oneself and to others. Dharma also is defined as righteousness or righteous duty, which is an expression of religion.

Swami Sivananda's concept of religion is guided by this fundamental principle. By religious life he means an active life in God, or performance of Dharma. He has a formula that states, in a condensed form, all that can be regarded as one's duty to oneself and also to others. His practical religion is portrayed in his formula: "Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise; be good, do good; be kind, be compassionate; bear insult, bear injury; enquire 'Who am I' and be free." In the following pages an explanation of this practical concept of universal religion, as taught by Swami Sivananda, is given, which is indeed best suited to the modern man.

In the world we find almost everyone, except the monks and ascetics, devoting himself or herself to make a living, or to earn wealth. Some do it by fair means; others do it by foul means. Obviously, those who do it by foul means think that they are more intelligent than the simple, honest people whom they can dupe. Some of them succeed and make huge fortunes for themselves and as a consequence exercise power to an extraordinary extent. They are able to intimidate not only the common people but also governments. They have no conception of ethical principles because they consider that success, however obtained, is the goal of life. The majority of the common people distrust them, and although they do not agree with their principles, they act in obedience to them because they feel they cannot otherwise get along.

The Busy Men

Swami Sivananda's formula of duty or personal religion is not for such dishonest people, who are not prepared to learn, but ismeant for only those who have an open mind. The formula is for the benefit of those who are prepared to respect ethical values and, if possible, to adopt in their life ethical principles. The formula is in the form of instructions. If they are followed carefully. there is a chance of the people making themselves happy even in this mundane life, in the midst of unhappiness and misery Among those who are to be benefited by these instructions, we may notice different groups of men and women.

First, we may take notice of those who have to spend most of their time earning a livelihood, or engaging themselves in their respective professions, having very little time to listen to lectures, or read the scriptures, or practise meditation and observe rituals. Let us take the case of a busy lawyer, or doctor, and examine how he has to spend his life. From morning till night, the busy lawyer or doctor will be besieged by clients or patients, requiring immediate attention, and the service to render them in return for the fees obtained, would involve the occupation of almost the entire time of the lawyer or the doctor. The lawyer returns from the court only to dive into the documents, preparing for the next day's case, reading the briefs given to him by his juniors, arriving at decisions, and going to bed late in the night, only to arise in the morning, early enough to go through the same routine.

Eagerness Not Absent

How, then, can he have time to think of God or any matter outside law or legal practice? The doctor, likewise, is to be at the disposal of the patients, whose cases he has to be thinking about, so that he can save their health or even possible death by the administration of the proper medicine, or the performance of the correct surgery. After his work he is literally tired out, for he might have been on his legs from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. continuously, and even when he is resting for an hour, there would be telephone calls to be attended to, which he cannot stop. Night and day he is the slave of his profession, with the only satisfaction that his bank balance goes on increasing. This bank balance however does not enable him to enjoy the leisure that God gives even to the factory workers or field labourers.

Now, how are such people to follow the advice of Swamiji? If you examine their hearts, you will notice that many are as eager as the spiritual aspirants to do something for bringing themselves into contact with a higher objective of life, or leading a life of spiritual idealism, in different degrees. But they are not able to think of anything other than their own work, because of the pressure of routine that is brought to bear upon them, since they are qualified experts in their own line. Now we must notice that even these people can benefit from the formula of Swamiji's practical religion. That is the object of Swamiji putting all the ethical and spiritual precepts into the form of this small formula, "Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise," which can be practised by all alike.

Service

The doctors or the lawyers could serve their patients or clients with the full consciousness that, without any regard for the fee obtained, they are going to render them the maximum service in the form of legal help or medical attention, which they require. If a lawyer does not take cases which are patently vicious, even though they might perhaps bring him the largest fee, unless he is ready to sell out his own intelligence for propping them up, and if he makes a firm resolve never to be connected with dishonesty of any kind, he will have taken the first step in the matter of serving humanity. Unfortunately, such lawyers are rare, but it is for such lawyers that the advice of 'serve' is given by Swamiji, with particular stress, as also to all such conscientious persons. For conscientiousness is the first step in the practice of religion. In serving the client, if the lawyer obtains from him only as much as the client can pay without undue strain, but at the same time, if the lawyer gives the best help that he can, that is the second step that he takes in the matter of service.

Similar is the case with all other professions. If man has the desire to rise above his base selfishness, in order to be helpful to others, he has taken a step forward in practical religion. If he does this, he is not only true to his conscience, but also is living in harmony with God's Will. He is rendering a service of the right kind, and, in spite of his getting a remuneration for his service, it is, if not selfless service absolutely, at leastnear to it. It is only those who have no desire to aspire spiritually, or are ignorant enough to be satisfied with mere ritualistic worship, that

complain of the lack of opportunity to serve. Even in one's own house one could practise this practical form of religion through unselfish helpfulness. Of course, Swami Sivananda advocates the performance of the ritualistic forms of religion as well, such as worship in a temple, recitation of God's Name, etc., but unless these have a substantial effect in the personal conduct of man, there is very little use of them.

Love

Like service Swamiji enjoins the injunction of 'love' to one who is desirous of following the principles of his religion. He means that man must have the feeling that just as he has got attachment to himself and his immediate relations, others also are entitled to have a share of this attachment, not in a physical sense, but as compassion and fellow-feeling, and, therefore, it is his duty to extend the love that he has for himself and his wife and children, to the people with whom he comes into contact; for all life is inter-related. If a man's busy life does not enable him to come into contact with those who are not directly connected with his profession, at least he can cultivate a feeling of compassion or kindness or helpful regard to those that come close to him in his sphere of activities.

Let not the lawyer develop a feeling of envy or jealousy to wards another lawyer to whom one of his own clients has take the case. Let him not feel jealous that the other lawyer is gettin much more in the form of remuneration than he himself gets Here comes the factor of contentment, a religious trait. Let hi consider that everything is the dispensation of God, that wh he gets will be enough for him and what another man gets does not get should not concern him. Usually little minds a filled with malice, envy and jealousy. These must be replac by the higher emotion of love for everybody.

In life we notice that man is very easily able to love who does not stand in his way or has no direct contact with h But if there is someone who happens to occupy a posi which he thinks is harmful to himself, that person is not lov but on the other hand, hated. It is under such circumstances that one should develop the quality, not only of tolerance and rising above jealousy, but also of real, positive love. One should even send loving thoughts to a person who otherwise would be hated. This practice of loving one and all is a very great step in religious life. Swamiji is emphatic about this primary factor. God is love, and unless we love our neighbours, we cannot erase our selfishness and cannot develop such qualities as will bring us nearer to God.

Charity

There is an Upanishadic story which is not worthwhile repeating here, but the gist of which is that human beings are naturally averse to giving. They are very fond of taking. Life cannot subsist in the world unless there is both give and take. Swamiji is a great believer in reciprocity, but he also says that give all that you can and take the least. That is the ideal. There are three classes of people. One, those who never give but always take. This is the common type, undeveloped and full of worldly defects. Two, those who take but give in return something. And three, those who give and never take anything at all. It is not necessary to explain which class is the highest. Naturally, those who do not take anything are nearest to God, but in the world it is so difficult for one to maintain oneself unless something is taken also. That is why the golden rule is to give the most and take the least. That is what Swamiji himself practises.

Now, giving must be either in the form of money or in the form of service, etc. But even the poorest man can give. He can pray to God for the relief of other people's sufferings. That is his way of giving when he has nothing else to give. But, even in poverty, he can share a little of what he has with another poor man. You can give your good thoughts, good words and even with a simple gift make other people happy. Though this comes under service, this is done as a separate service. In the case of the busy and well-to-do people, whom we have taken into account, the best they can do is to devote almost all that they obtain over and above their reasonable needs, and that of their family, for charitable purposes.

There is a little story about a very old man planting coconut plants. A neighbour asked him if he was expecting to obtaincoconuts from the plant he was planting, for by the time the tree bore coconuts, the old man

would have passed away But the old man replied, "I may have gone, but I have eaten coconuts grown from trees that have been planted by others, and, similarly, my tree will yield coconuts for those who have to take them." That is the kind of spirit which must dominate the minds of the people who give a little of what they have. Such is the spirit of Swamiji. He always likes to give what he has to others and never hoards anything for himself. That is why others also give him in abundance. But his nature of giving is such that he is never free from monetary debts, for which he does not worry. for the Lord always gives him.

Purity, Meditation, Realisation

Purification consists in one's continuous endeavour to keep the devil at a distance and avoid temptation of selfish benefits at the expense of honesty and truth. Purification of the mind is the preliminary step to be taken before the image or the powers of the Lord can be received in it. As long as the dense vibrations of selfishness and self-love agitate the mind, the rarer vibrations of love, truth and goodness will not be able to make themselves felt. Till love, truth, goodness, have their sway in the mind, God cannot be received in it. Therefore, it is purification, obtained by constant introspection, self-examination, cultivation of virtues and repetition of the Lord's name, which is prescribed as one of the processes of self-development by Swamiji. This is possible even for the busiest of men, because it consists in eliminating, then and there, the evil thought that arises and replacing it by its counterpart.

Meditation is too difficult a practice to succeed in by all; especially the busy man of the world will have the least ability to do effective meditation. The only thing that can be done by him is to remember God as per the concept dear to his heart, and repeat His name mentally. Even as he is casually moving along, he will come across beautiful objects of nature, and if he develops the habit of seeing God's hand in the creation of these, in the discipline and the order that are observable in the universe, that will be a form of divine contemplation. Wherever you look, you find the glory of the Lord. This should not be missed, and if one makes it a habit of seeing this glory everytime he is free of other thoughts, he will be really meditating upon God. Also one could have two sittings of meditation, in the early morning and before retiring to bed, and spend sometime in the remembrance of God in one's own way

The recognition of the fact that one is only an instrument in the hands of the Lord is the first step in spiritual realisation if the common man develops at least this tendency of recognising that the whole universe is worked and maintained by a com mon Father and that one has come into the world for the purpose of doing something which God has already decided to do through oneself, one will have gone through the first step in realisation. Higher steps in God-realisation may be for more spiritually evolved people. But even the common man can try the above way of negating his ego and making himself an agent of the Lord. Selfless service, unselfish love, charity, purification and meditation are the other steps to God-realisation

Goodness, Compassion

As told in the beginning, Swami Sivananda's religion consists not only in self-improvement, but in discharging one's duty to others. Being good is essential before doing good. The only way in which we can feel that we have been born with a purpose in life is by doing good to others. It is not necessary to explain what is good as long as a person has got the ordinary commonsense as not to thrust himself upon others and become a nuisance; he may be expected to find out opportunities to show his goodness to other people through concrete, unassuming evidence. Of course, a little bit of intelligence is needed if he is not to become one of the bores who come out as philanthropists or social workers and thrust themselves upon society, displeasing the people with whom they come in contact and to whom they believe that they are doing good.

Now, the real reason for the dissatisfaction caused bysuch busy-bodies will be found to be that their intention mostlyis to gain some reputation rather than to be useful to the peoplewho must be helped. If such a worthless interference with others is avoided, one can find innumerable ways of doing good.The most effective way is to do good without anybody knowingit and without thinking of having done the good. To do good andto speak of it, will take away half the value of having done the good. To do good and to think of it is taking away one fourth of

its value. The man who is desirous of being good cannot but do good, and one who himself is good can do real good to others

Even the busiest man cannot excuse himself by saying he has no time to do good or be good. A desire to do good springs from a compassionate heart. Kindness or compassion is a mark of the religious man. One cannot practise religion without being compassionate. The Lord shuns the hard-hearted. In relationship with others, kindness and compassion should be the predominant factors. Without these, life is a dreary desert and religion a hypocrisy.

Self-Enquiry

It is difficult for the ordinary man to understand that he is, in reality, the Paramatman, temporarily dwelling in a human body. To understand the nature of the Self one must understand one's personality, one's own mind. Study of oneself would help one to grow in spirituality and ultimately realise the Self. No life is separate. Man is a part of the universe, and, therefore, he is bound to be in harmony with the universe. He should not do anything for the purpose of upsetting the peace of the other people near him, who are also part of the universe like himself. He can have such simple thoughts relating to the question of enquiring as to who he is. Self-enquiry would enable one to find out one's defects and potentialities, and act according to the religious law of self-improvement and eventual realisation.

Even an ordinary man, who has a feeling that he has done nothing against the dictates of his conscience, nothing in short of which he need be ashamed, enjoys a sense of freedom-the freedom of the conscience. It is the man with guilty conscience that is ever afraid of the consequences of his guilt and of the possibility of somebody harming him, in return, for the harm that he has done. Freedom of the conscience leads to freedom from the bondages of material life, with the composite practice of detachment, non-expectation of the fruits of one's action, by being an instrument of the Lord.

Endurance

"Bear insult, bear injury." These are practical instructions, to keep oneself unagitated by anything that might happen. The question will arise: Whether it will be possible at all for a person to bear insult and forget it when he has been seriously insulted or maliciously denigrated? But there is a practical way which can be adopted for the purpose of bearing insult and injury. which, according to Swamiji, is an important spiritual discipline. Just remember that the person who insults or injures you might have a cause to do so, and thereby, not only he helps you to correct yourself in your future dealings and gain practical wisdom, but also offers you the chance to cultivate a forgiving heart. Forgiveness is divine, a basic religious trait. Balance of mind is the characteristic of one who practises religion. Tit for tat is not the way of religious conduct.

Suppose, a little child of three years throws mud at you when you are walking along, will you beat him? You will just pass along, if you are a mature man, feeling that the child has done it in ignorance. Develop the same attitude towards those who injure and insult you, because they are ignorant. But do not give them further opportunity for their misbehaviour by conditioning your conduct in a correct way. If you carefully look to thecauses for your miseries, you will find that in almost all cases you are largely to blame yourself. Endurance also gives you a chance to practise self-improvement.

Conclusion

Thus we find that Swami Sivananda's practical religion enables us to purify our heart by selfless service to the creations of God, ennoble our nature by unselfish love towards all, and improve ourselves through the other means explained in the foregoing pages. His religion of which he is a living example, is but a way of life, a life in God, for the realisation of God, in and through the world. To him religion is a vital principle, a practical expression of spirituality, that which does not cease merely with ritualism. He has, of course, given numerous forms of Sadhana

for the spiritual quest of man, and vastly elaborated the various facets of religious principles in his prolific writings. Basically, however, his concept of practical religion boils down to the simple formula: "Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise; be good, do good;be kind; be compassionate; enquire 'Who am I,' know the Self, and be free."

Chapter Twelve

SUMMING UP

ANOUTLINEOFYOGA

The purpose of life is the realisationoftheessentialDivinityinman. The science of Yoga points out the ways. The main branches of Yoga are four, whicharenotcontradictorybutcomplemental to one another. They are:

Karma Yoga: which is fit forthepeopleofactivetemperament;

Raja Yoga: which is suitableforthemystictype;

Bhakti Yoga: which is properforthepeopleofemotionalnature; and

Jnana Yoga or Vedanta: whichisappropriatefortheintellectual or the rational type.

A synthesis of these four meansisnecessarytoeffectaquick progress in the spiritual path. Jnana Yoga may be taken as the basis, and the othersasauxiliaries.Indeed,in order to be decisive in one's endeavours in the field of Yoga, one must have intellectualconviction,clearvision,and a sound reasoning faculty. These, on the other hand, will be of no practical importance,ifonedoesnothavepurification of heart (Karma Yoga), devotion to God (Bhakti Yoga) and balance of mind (RajaYoga).

Hatha Yoga is a sub-divisioninRajaYogawhichenjoinsAsana and Pranayama, both of them being two of the eight sections in Raja Yoga.

Asana and Pranayama are necessary for keeping the mind and the body in healthy condition. These enable one to have good concentration and meditation, and ultimately enter into Samadhi.

Two other basic preliminaries are Yama and Niyama, which give the rules for right conduct, self-restraint, and physical and mental purity.

To practise Yoga, one need not abandon one's religion, one need not perform any crude acrobatics, and one need not run away from the world.

By the practice of Yoga, people can acquire excellent health, boundless vigour, strong determination, fearlessness, indomitable will, balance of mind, lasting peace and real happiness.

Yoga points out the way to the kingdom of infinite beatitude, perennial light, and eternal life. This is achieved through cultivation of divine qualities, equal vision and remembrance of God at all time.

YOGA FOR EVERY MAN

Yoga is notother-worldliness. Yoga is not magic. Physical feats are not Yoga. Asana and Pranayama alone are not Yoga. though they are two of the several parts of the Yoga system Yoga is primarily a way of life, not something which is divorced from life.

Yoga is not a negation of the world, but a means to cultivate a correct perception into the nature of things, and one's relation to them. Yoga is not forsaking of action, but its efficient performance, in the right spirit. Yoga is not running away from home and human habitation, but a process of moulding one's attitude to home and society, with a new understanding.

Attachment to life is death. Freedom from attachment is life. It is attachment which dwarfs man's potentialities and binds his selfish ego to the objects into which it is projected, not for the sake of any intrinsic love for them, for their own sake, but because they are useful to him, and for the sake of his own ego.

Change of Outlook

Yoga is primarily a process which turns this angle of vision, into a wider perspective. Life is sustained by a common divine Consciousness, and it is the ego which veils that consciousness. This evil has to be torn asunder, and one must perceive the world as a manifestation of the Divine.

Service done in the light of this consciousness is worship of the Divine, and though man might be performing the duties that life has bequeathed on him, he would be doing them, not for the sake of his selfish gain, but in view of larger interests, and in a spirit of detachment, in the sense that his little self is not associated with the performance of such duties. He would do them as an instrument of the Divine, guided by the light of his pure conscience.

This performance of what is called right action, in the right spirit, in the right manner, is one of the aspects of Yoga, in which is included a large range of preliminaries. One can have a pure conscience only when the vehicle is pure, and this callsfor a long process of self-purification Self-purification is one of the basic processes of Yoga.

Spirit of Yoga

Detachment does not come from irresponsibility, but from right discernment. Spiritual values are superior to material considerations. Temporal welfare of the people is essential, but not by running down human values, and moral and spiritual principles. With every individual, this should be the primary endeavour.

The one spirit is immanent in all, therefore, one has no right to be selfish. Humanity is a family of common parentage. therefore, religious beliefs or social traditions of groups of people should not divide one another. Man should have broadmindedness, understanding, spirit of accommodation

Life is meant for spiritual unfoldment. Human life is higher than animal life in the sense that man is not expected to behave like an animal. Therefore, the baser propensities in one's character have to be restrained and sublimated. This is another concurrent process of Yoga. Control of mind and the senses is the basic step, and then the inculcation of a sound moral sense and direction of one's actions as per one's moral convictions.

Refraining from that which would bring harm to others or run contrary to fundamental spiritual principles, man should place the interests of those with whom he is directly associated above his own. His first loyalty should be to God and His Law; his second consideration should be the interests of those whom he serves; and his last concern should be his personal, individual comfort and welfare-always and every time (because man is so spirit of Yoga. so deeply and persistently selfish). This is the spirit of Yoga.

Unveiling the Inner Reality

We see, we hear, we smell, we taste, we touch, we move about, we speak, we work, we think. All these functions point to a power that provides the motive-force for all our thoughts and actions. We try to understand, discriminate and choose; we will and do. These are possible because there is a supreme Intelligence within us, which is veiled by our egotism and bound upby the tentacles of the worldly impressions we have gathered The process of Yoga is unveiling that Intelligence within, by removing these outer coverage and tentacles

Protracted endeavour is the price, but every little act of kindness and helpfulness, every attempt at self-abnegation, sincerity and regularity in practice, pave the way to success Unselfishness is an expression of Yoga in practical life. Balance of mind is another expression. Non-attachment to self, and spirit of service (it is here self-association plays its worst role and which must be guarded against) are its effective expressions. Devotion to spiritual values, compassion for all, absence of religious bigotry, and practical life under the rule of the higher mind, are its noble fruits.

Performances of basic, cultural Yoga postures, and mild and simple regulation of breath, help one to maintain good health, while exerting a sobering influence over the mind. But they should not be made a fad of, for they are only a means, not an end by themselves.

Basic Practices

Practice of concentration makes the mind strong and one-pointed, and meditation brings enlightenment. The process of the withdrawal of the mind from external objects, abstinence and self-discipline in other ways, strengthen the will. Nurturing of positive thought and contemplation on the nature of the Divine, help in the purification of the mind. Non-entertainment of negative thoughts, avoidance of undesirable company and of similar other influences, help in making the lower nature wither out by itself, while positive endeavours are simultaneously kept up.

Yoga is not an enemy of the senses. What it expects of you is to have mastery over them. Yoga does not want you to kill the mind, for as long as the body is there, killing the mind, in toto, is only an academic supposition. The objective of Yoga is control of the modifications of the mind, attainment of equilibrium, and reversing the position from being its servant to becoming its master.

Once these techniques are learnt well, you are able to function in the Gita spirit. You work, but are not bound by thework you do. You serve, but do not expect a reward thereof. You are dynamic, but not hurried or agitated. You are full of concern for the welfare of others, but are not infatuated with individuals. You are humble, but fearless. You are noble, but modest You speak the truth always, but do not harm others thereby. You are full of compassion and love, but are not exclusively possessive. You are pure, but not a narrow-minded, self-righteous puritan.

Thus it is possible for everyone to practise Yoga in daily life, as one who feels one's brotherhood with all, who fulfils one's duties and role insociety, while not being high and dry, or living in an ivory tower and proclaiming one's distinct superiority over therest of humanity.

COMMON OBJECTIVE OF YOGA

It is not strange that most people do not have access to Yoga beyond its physical level, because true Yoga needs intense personal discipline, together with burning aspiration, under the guidance of an able teacher. The majority looks for material advantages, and when Yoga promises superphysical and spiritual blessings, it becomes rather unattractive to the common mind which clamours for immediate, tangible results.

Yoga is not merely a means of personal regeneration butis universal in character and can be and should be effectivelyapplied in all walks of life such as social, national, political. Theconcept of Yoga ranges beyond not only the physical but alsothe mental levels of existence. Hence the concept of the novices, especially in the West, that Yoga constitutes physical exercises, or merely Asanas and Pranayamas, is an error.

Cosmic Process

Yoga is a cosmic process of the Divine (Aisvarya-Yoga) which makes itself felt in every individual in the cosmos. Physical exercises, sports and recreation have nothing to do with real Yoga, though certain exercises like Asana, Pranayama, Bandha, Mudra and Kriya are surely aids to the objective of Yoga, namely, spiritual perfection and union with the Divine. But on no account can Yoga be reduced to the level of recreational exercises or sports and the like.

Yoga is not one-sided: this is the essence of the whole matter. Yoga is all-inclusive-it comprises physical, mental and moral education and culture in the highest spiritual sense When it is said that the statesman or the administrator should first be a philosopher, what is meant is that spirit should direc matter, that the universal interest should influence the particu lar interest, that integration of living in the different stages an strata of the realisation of ideals and values should govern pe sonal interest and desire. Yoga is intended to aid all this: should shape a general philosophy of life.

Self-Integration

There cannot be different Yogas on the personal level and the Government level, and so on. The objective of Yoga is one. It is applied in different ways in different walks of life. Yoga is a system of integral education, i.e., the education, not only of the body and the mind or the intellect, but also of the inner spirit. In other words, Yoga means "the complete life."

Social work, educational reforms, philanthropic service. political activity and national reconstruction, at least according to the standard scripture on Yoga, the Bhagavadgita, are meaningful only in the light of the process of self-integration of the individual, the family, the community, the nation and the world. It is a process that enables the individual to solve his inner problems, to live in harmony with himself, the family and the community. It is a process of understanding oneself, whereby one is able to understand others better. It is a process of self-discipline and sublimation. It is an ideal for the individual, the community and the nation.

People's Responsibility

At present no such Yoga is observable in the life of our nation, and the responsibility in this regard is not merely of the Government; it is basically of the people. They must take more interest in a proper understanding of the ideal of Yoga and should be able to feel how essential it is for an integral living. The whole point is whether we merely live for food, clothing or shelter, for name, fame, power and wealth, or whether there is a deeper and wider purpose in our existence and activity in this world.

The secular and material ideals are surely worth striving for, for the good of the people, but these can be successfully achieved only through a vision that is lifted above the simply secular and material. The whole nation is in dire need of Yama and Niyama, the basic requirement in Yoga, viz., self-discipline and ethics. The people must wake up to their deficiency.

Yama-Niyama

I feel that, provided the people take a sufficient interest in acquiring this basic requirement of Yoga and take the initiative in applying it in individual and collective living, only then could they aspire for spiritual attainments. Where is our self-discipline? Are we a disciplined nation? Where is our integrity-personal, commercial and national? Are we really honest in personal and public life? Are we practical, enterprising and persevering? We must answer these questions first, and then talk of spirituality and glorious culture. Let us build the basis first, instead of living in a fool's paradise. Let the nation be rooted in Yama and Niyama.

What are the cultural and national interests? An answer to this question will bring out the extent to which human society is in need of the practice of Yoga. Culture is mainly personal, for the society or the nation is nothing but a group of individuals bound by kindred purposes. The good of the nation cannot be bad for the individual, for the good is one, though likes and dislikes may be variegated. To achieve this good, all have toendeavour in right earnest. There should be a strong moral consciousness in the public. We seem to have no public opinion at all. The people's minds are bound up by a massive, slavish, indolent, fatalistic disposition. We must wake up to our responsibility.

National Yoga

There is so much of talk aboutsecularandspiritualidealism Both are not diametrically opposite. In public life, both are interdependent. Only thecolossallyignorantmindcould think of secular achievement at the cost of spiritual progress, and spiritual attainmentatthecostofmaterial benefits of the people. The Yogic idealism strikes a balance of the two. Efficientperformanceofaction,without attachment and selfish motive, is Yoga. Efficient performance of one's dutyisYoga.DefenceofDharmais Yoga. Control of mind and senses is Yoga. The Bhagavadgita gives the bestidealoftheintegralYoga.Let India, instead of giving lip-service to its spiritual heritage, make itself a strong nationofpracticalwisdomandsound moral principles, through the practice of Yoga.

Let the people ofIndiabuildthenationalfoundation of ethics and discipline through the practice of Yama and Niyama, acquire a soundphysicalhealththroughthe practice of Asana and Pranayama, cultivate balance of mind and higher idealismthroughserviceforthenational good and meditation for individual enlightenment. Let India follow the lead givenintheBhagavadgita.

IDEALISM OF YOGA

(A Statement presented by the Divine Life Society to the Committee for the Evaluation of Yoga Practices, appointed by the Government of India, when its members visited Sivanandanagar on April 1, 1961.)

It is, indeed, not strange that most people do not have access beyond the physical level of Yoga, because true Yoga needs intense personal discipline, coupled with hard thinking, under the guidance of an able Teacher. The majority looks for material advantages, and, when Yoga promises superphysical and spiritual blessings, it becomes unattractive to the common mind, clamouring for immediate tangible results.

Yoga is not merely a means of personal regeneration but is universal in character, and can be and should be effectively applied in all walks of life-social, national, educational, etc. This concept of Yoga ranges beyond, not only the physical, but also the mental realms of existence. Hence the idea of novices that Yoga constitutes physical exercises or merely Asanas and Pranayamas, etc., is an error.

We understand Yoga as a Cosmic Process of the Divine Nature (Aisvarya-Yoga) making itself felt in every individual in the Cosmos. Physical exercises have nothing to do with real Yoga, though certain exercises like Asanas and Pranayamas, Bandhas, Mudras and Kriyas are considered to be aids in Yoga practice.

Purpose of Yoga

Yoga is not one-sided: this is the essence of the whole matter. Yoga is all-inclusive-it comprises physical, mental and moral education and culture in the highest spiritual life which is the supreme ideal of existence. When it is said that the statesman or the administrator should first be a philosopher, what is meant is that Spirit should direct matter, that the universal should determine the particular, that integration of living in the different stages and strata of the realisation of ideals and values should govern personal interest and desire.

Yoga does all this, and genuine philosophy is life in Yoga There cannot be different Yogas for the personal level and social and governmental level, etc. Yoga is One. It is applied in different ways in different departments of life. Yoga is a system of integral education, i.e., education, not only of the body and the mind or the intellect, but also of the inner spirit. Yoga is the complete life.

Social work, educational reforms and philanthropic deeds, as well as political activity and effort towards national uplift are, at least according to the standard scripture of Yoga-the Bhagavadgita meaningful only in the light of this Yoga of self-integration in the individual, family, community, nation and the world. What can be a greater joy than the hope that the governments of the world, especially of India today, will awaken to the knowledge of this great and grand art and science of life, and bring it into full use in the daily life of the people!

At present no such Yoga is observable in the life of our nation, and the responsibility in this regard is not merely of the Government; it is also of the people. They must take more interest in a proper understanding of it and be able to feel how essential it is for significant living. The whole point is whether we live for food, clothing and shelter, and name, fame, power and wealth, or whether there is a deeper and wider purpose in our existence and activity here.

Even supposing the secular and material ideals are worth striving after for their own sake, Yoga proclaims that these can be successfully achieved, in their true forms, with a vision that is lifted above the simply secular.

Yoga in National Life

Provided people take sufficient interest in acquiring this knowledge and take the initiative in applying it in their daily lives, the Government will naturally have to pay proper attention to it. Public support is based on public interest, and this interest again is based on right understanding. The first to be done is to dispel ignorance. The expected result will follow.

What are the cultural and national interests? An answer to this question will bring out the extent to which human society isin need of the practice of Yoga. Culture is basically personal; for the society or the nation is nothing but a group of individuals bound by kindred purposes. The good of the nation cannot be bad for the individual, nor the true good of the individual derogatory to national interest; for THE GOOD is one, though likes and dislikes may be variegated.

To achieve this Good, all do and have toendeavour. The Government is the protector of the principal interests of the nation, not only material and intellectual but also moral and spiritual. Here the need for Yoga in national life comes into light relief. People should feel it. The Government should help it. The grace of the Almighty is on us.

The unique feature of Yoga is that it is a method which overhauls all the sides of the human personality, and the pursuit of any aspect of it, *fully and correctly*, means a parallel advancement along all the other aspects, also. One should be able to fulfil the demands of the conditions to which one's individuality is subject, by resort to the transempirical reality underlying the individuality.

The Yogi *par excellence* is he who, ever united with the Eternal Being within, lives as a normal person, working in the world for the good of all, guiding others without disturbing their faith. It means to learn to be friendly with the universe, not to try to conquer it, as if it is one's enemy. The relative should conform to the Absolute, though the relative is not the Absolute in the characteristics it manifests. It is supreme obedience to law, by love.

Attunement

With the equipment of this inner enlightenment, the aspirant may seek to tread the path of Yoga in any vocation of life. Every act then becomes a necessary expression of the impulse to see and serve the Virat in all beings. All actions turn into an adoration of God with the love that inundates the heart of the devotee. Every category of the universe, every item of experience, every mode of consciousness becomes a divine worship and a sport of the Infinite.

The beauty here is that one attunes oneself to the Infinite at every stage of life, even at the most fundamental step, withthe powers given at that particular level. The one condition however, is that there should be a thorough abandonment of the lower appetites, and of vanity and conceit. None who hugs delusions and worships flesh and mammon, none who is not humbled before the wonder of the vision beatific in the form of this creation, none who believes that this is exclusively one and that is another, can hope to achieve success in Yoga. Yoga, to us, is the life that anyone has to lead, only with the knowledge as to what it is, and its relations to the universe really are.

THE YOGA WAY OF LIFE

The Yoga system, especially that propounded by the sage Patanjali, is a masterly science of psychology. We are asked to control the modifications of the mind-stuff in order to be able to have clear perception and true insight. Patanjali points out that we become normal only when we cease from thinking in terms of forms of the mental modification and begin to adopt quite a different way of perception. In other words, we have to rest in our own selves, first, in order that we may be healthy and also have a healthy perception of things.

All types of objective thinking are considered in our system of Yoga as certain diseased conditions of consciousness, for in these states the consciousness is not in itself. Whenever it is not in a state of rest in itself it gets identified with the forms of the mind, and assumes for the time being their spatio-temporal shapes. In this empirical process the individual consciousness often comes in conflict with other such centres in the forms of other persons who have their own special modes of self-identification with other types of mental transformations. Human misery has its roots in this self-contradiction born of ignorance of the structure of the perceptible diversity and its basis in the One.

Integration of Personality

A successful life-and a happy life-is possible only when one is able to adjust and adapt the different sides of the personality in a harmonious way and the entire personality with the others that form the constituents of the world. In this sense, life is an art. What does an artist do? He has a definite idea of an end to be executed and achieved, he collects the necessary material as means for the purpose, and arranges the material in a methodical and harmonious manner.

He selects the proper requisites, removes what is unshapely, adds what is necessary and brings about a system and completeness in his work in consonance with the nature of the purpose in view. This is the case with great works of art, whether architecture and sculpture, painting and drawing, ormusic and literature. The essence of art is the arrangement of material to produce rhythm, symmetry, order, fullness, and a sense of perfection so far as the mind can conceive of them.

We have to arrange the pattern of life, with its forces of the outward Nature and inward impulses, so that there may not be any jarring element or inharmonious appearance unsuited to the purpose of realising the equilibrium of the universe as reflected in our personal lives, in the life of society, the community, the nation and the world. We do not belong merely to ourselves, not even merely to any particular society or country. but we are citizens of the universe to which we owe a tremendous duty. And this duty is nothing but feeling and acting in a way that may not negate or violate the truth that the essence of the universe is an indivisible fullness.

Yoga: An Art and Science

This art of self-adjustment with the entire creation is called Yoga. It is an art that appeals to the being within, which is also without, at the same time. Yoga is an art insofar as any successful practice of it demands of us a sort of genius and uncommon insight which cannot be expressed in mathematical or logical terms. But Yoga is also a science in the sense that it follows certain fixed laws and its principles are eternal, irrespective of class, creed, place and time.

It is the knitting together, as it were, of the various springs of thought and action to form a connected and beautiful fabric in the universal scheme. It is the science of peace, of inner delight, and it requires that at one and the same moment we have to be at peace, not only with the different levels of our being, but also with the various strata of external life.

A happy man who has been able to lead a successful life is one who is thoroughly friendly not only with the structural demands of his own body, mind, emotions, and intellect but also with the different elements that go to form the world outside. The Yoga system by its technical terms as Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana,

Dhyana and Samadhi, expresses in a highly mystic way the need for perfect discipline of the body, the vital forces, the senses of perception, the functions of themind, the intellect and the reason from the standpoint of the universe taken as a whole.

Purpose of Life

Life is a preparation for Self-realisation, a training ground for the individual to transfigure himself in self-dedication to the Absolute Reality. Some have compared this earthly life to a temporary halting of pilgrims in an inn, which is not the destination but only a means of help in the journey. We are not to take the experiences of this life as ends in themselves but as processes of self-advancement and chastening of the inner spirit for a higher fulfilment.

Our joys and sufferings, our exhilarations and griefs, our prejudices and ideas are not to be valued as realities in themselves but as certain conditions which we have to overstep, and which will mean nothing to us when transcended in a deeper wisdom. Our present life is a flow of events, and nothing that changes can be called the real.

Herein comes into high relief the significance of the teaching that we have to perform actions, without regard for their fruits, because the fruits are not in our hands, they are determined by the ultimate law of the universe, which, in the present condition of our minds, we can neither understand nor follow.

Our Position

Our duty is to act, act in the right way, bearing in mind that we are fulfilling an inviolable and unavoidable imperative, not forced upon us by any outward mandate, but by the law of our own being, to ignore which would be nothing short of folly. To work with any fixed ulterior motive beforehand would be like naming a child before it is born. The position is that no one can clearly envisage or understand the nature of an effect which would follow a particular action.

That we glibly talk of fixed results of visible causes and hope for desired ends of our actions only shows that we have a very narrow outlook and forget the fact that nothing in this inter-related universe is absolutely self-dependent but requires the cooperation of infinite centres of force for it to come into being at all. Take a concrete example. I say that a book placed ona table has the table as its support. Am I right? Perhaps you would say I am. But we do not stop to think here that the table it self is supported by the floor.

And where is the support for the floor? It is perhaps kept fixed by certain beams placed crosswise beneath it, which again are supported by walls, the walls being supported by the foundation, and the foundation by earth. Is the position of the earth self-dependent? No. The earth's position and motion are governed by the attraction of other planets in relation to itself. and we should not forget here that the planets are held in position by the terrific gravitational force of the sun.

Right Attitude

All the galaxies in the infinite ocean of space are rushing away from one another, including our Milky Way and the solar system in it, with a tremendous velocity. Where are we, and where is the book placed on the table? The existence of things is really marvellous, and, surely, our life is precarious. What right have we, then, under these circumstances, to expect what we have in our minds? We can be justified in hoping only for that thing which is sanctioned by the unitary law of the universe taken as a single whole.

The Bhagavad-Gita, for example, exhorts us not to have attachment to things. Obviously, any outward attachment is not permissible in the scheme of things as they truly are. To which object am I to be attached, when everything outside me is inseparably related to me, and we are all mutually inclusive and determined in this magnificent home of God's creation? Where is that special endowment of reason, of which man so much boasts,

when he acts as an animal in thinking that he can have special attitudes to particular objects and yet hope to be let off scot-free?

Every action has a reaction which comes with an equal force of nemesis and retribution, for every action is a sort of disturbance produced in the equilibrium of the universe, and the universe shall ever maintain its balance by rebutting the force of disturbance created in its being in the form of an action of thought. How marvellous is life, how grand, how just, and yet how relentless!

Truth Behind Appearance

The correct spirit with which we have to work in this world is one of self-sacrifice and surrender to the Supreme Cause of all things. As a famous verse has it, whatever there is as this vast world, visible or heard of all this is pervaded inside and outside, throughout, by the Eternal Spirit. Another verse tells us that we have to see the immanent Divine in earth and water, in the mountains and the flame of fire, and that the whole world is nothing but the appearance of God. The correct perception is designated as Isvaradrishti, the practice of the presence of God in each and everything, in every quarter and cranny, everywhere, and at all times.

The essence of the Gita teachings is this, that the universe is the body of God, nay, it is God Himself appearing to us through our senses, the mind and the intellect, that there is nothing outside of God ever existent, that man is bound to have prosperity, victory, happiness and lawful polity when he acts with this consciousness,- with the deep feeling that he is an instrument in the hands of the Absolute, that his actions are really not his but Its, and that suffering is inevitable the moment he cuts his consciousness off from the Divine. The happy and the normal life is, therefore, the Divine Life.

Inner Discipline

This is a grand concept, and this is the goal. But there are certain lesser aspects in our life which we cannot ignore if we areto be successful in our different endeavours for perfection.First, we have to use our emotions properly and adjust them insuch a way that they do not create any discord in life's harmonious process. Second, we have always to attempt to make afuller use of our personalities than we actually do in states ofmisconception, prejudice and ignorance.

There has to be brought about a complete reorientation of our ways of thinking, in the light of eternal facts amidst which we exist. There is that absolute necessity to bring about in ourselves those necessary changes, now and then, to attune ourselves to the vast universal environment. Think properly about yourselves, and understand your position in the expanse of theenvironment around you.-whether it is family, the community. the country, or the world.

Face your weaknesses with an adamantine will, but know also your strengths, and use them to adapt yourselves to the circumstances in which you find yourselves at any given moment of time. In this you have to be very diligent, sincere and honest. Remember, always, that what is important is not so much what you are, as to what extent you know why you are. what you are, and how much you endeavour to improve yourselves in the right direction. Of course, do not be in a hurry

Need for Sound Idealism

Understand well before you take a step. There cannot be a right attempt without a clear-cut ideal before it, and directing it. A race horse put to a plough or a plough horse put to race will not lead to any substantial result. We have to know our powers, our knowledge, and go only so far; not further.

If you are emotionally healthy, you will find that you will be comfortable with yourselves, and would not need the company of a crowd, or even of other persons related to you. No doubt, this is only one aspect of the question, because the most well-adjusted person should be comfortable and perfectly at ease either way. Watch

yourselves in a crisis, and detect what you are. You can know your weaknesses when you are thwarted, opposed, threatened or when you find yourselves in danger.

You can also know your buried desires and urges, your cravings and fears, when you are put to such a test. The training of the emotions and the development of strength within, however, is not difficult for one who has a genuine conviction that he is backed up at all times by a mighty Power that works everywhere in the cosmos, and that he has nothing to fear. This faith should be born of conviction, enlightened understanding, and a real love for the Supreme Being. This is self-mastery by which one can invoke incredible powers to function at any time in one's life.

Mastery Over Self

Inner conflicts are mostly results of the inability to fulfil the basic instinctive urges, which, again, is due to ignorance of one's hidden capacities and of the way by which to utilise properly the facilities provided under the conditions in which one is placed. You have to know clearly (1) what ought to be done, (2) what is capable of being done, (3) what has been done already, (4) why something has not been done yet, and (5) how to overcome the obstacles in a reasonable manner. This means that you have to be master of your own psychology.

A successful life includes physical, emotional, intellectual and moral fitness based on an integration of being in all its degrees, inwardly as well as outwardly. Know yourselves as higher than you now are. Summon the reserve forces which lie latent within, and use them for the constructive work of building the structure of life which is not merely yours, but of everyone, equally. When the diversity of beings is beheld as rooted in the One, and as having proceeded from the One, then does one attain to Perfection, says the Bhagavad-Gita. But the achievement of this end is hard, though possible for everyone. It demands inner toughness born of a perfect moral nature.

Fundamental Ethics

A capacitytoloveandtoserveallwith the feeling of the presence of a common element behind everyone, to be truthfulandhonestandstraightforward at any cost, to be able to feel for others as one does for oneself, not to do to otherswhatwouldnotbedesirable for oneself, to have always a concern for the good of the whole world and not merelyofarestrictedgroupofpersons, not to attempt at appropriating things which do not lawfully belong to oneself,tobeperfectlycontinentand restrained in thought, word and deed, to be able to look at the world with a cosmicvision,andtoactatalltimeswith this Consciousness, is the requisite qualification demanded of a truly culturedpersonandaseekerofTruth.

Weareneitherwisenorright when we lose sight of this meaning of the educational process and act in a way that is notwarrantedbythisvision of perfection. But success is near at hand, if only we would have a rightly directed will.Anditisforourowngood. Let us pray in the sublime words of the Upanishads:

Leadusfromtheunrealtothe Real,
LeadusfromdarknesstoLight,
LeadusfromdeathtoImmortality.

FIRST STEPS FIRST

Often man wants to know the taste of a dish, before eating it, he wants to learn to swim without entering water! Theory is not experience; and, naturally disappointed, he turns away from truth, into the open lanes of aimless, purposeless, animal life.

Man is the image of God; and it is as true today as it was in Biblical times, in the Vedic period. Truth does not change; that is the criterion of truth. The quest for this truth is also eternal and ever fresh. In the heart of each individual there is this yearning to know the truth. But, to know the truth is to experience it, not merely understand it with the intellect. The latter is a wayside station, not the destination.

Man wants to know himself, to realise himself. He wants to understand the world around him. He wants to probe into the beyond, in space and in spirit. There is in him an unquenchable hunger to KNOW. He fashions the instruments with which he can acquire that knowledge. He is permanently satisfied with none. Of what use are external instruments and devices? They are but aids, often poor aids, to his own inner intelligence!

Psychology tries to analyse man's "inside." They that dare to go deep enough are staggered by the vastness of this inner field. They that graze on the surface grope in the dark. Man, the real man, remains the unknown.

The little hands of a babe cannot hold a book, nor can untutored mind read it. The little, finite, frail, impure intellect cannot realise the infinite, radiant self of man. A dirty mirror, thickly coated with dense soot, cannot reflect your face. Man's impure heart, thickly laden with the subtle impressions of countless lives of undivine life, cannot all at once reveal the Divinity that is enshrined in it.

Self-Purification

First things first. Clear the soot and clean the mirror, instead of condemning the mirror or declaring that it is impossible to see one's own reflection in the mirror. Wipe the heart clean of its dross, of the impurity that has accumulated over it, with the brush of purity, of love and of spiritual aspiration. Let the babegrow into a youth and be educated, before the book of life is given into his hands. Man should grow out of his bestiality, grow out of even his mere human nature and become divine; he must be educated in the art and science of Yoga or divine life. before he can understand and realise his essential divine nature.

The ancient sages, the pioneers in this discovery of the soul of man, had seen what sort of equipment the seeker after truth would need, and what preliminary training and discipline would be indispensable if he desired to realise the truth. To ignore them is to forfeit the delight of Self-discovery.

Every religion in the world, every school of religious thought, every saint or prophet, has emphasised that man must purify his heart, must grow in selflessness, in self-restraint, truthfulness, humility and purity, before he can really, truly and fruitfully seek after truth. But, man, proud of his discoveries and inventions in the plane of matter, and unwilling to shed the animal in him, vainly attempts to probe the spirit with his material instruments, and when these cannot find it, declares that it does not exist!

Faith

Yet, truth does not suffer from such childish denial. It is man himself who suffers. Electric current is not switched off from a live wire by an ignorant man's denial of it; the foolish man receives the shock all right when he touches the wire. Even so, the ignorant man, who denies God, denies the soul, denies the existence of anything except the gross, "solid" world of matter, is rudely awakened to the existence of something beyond, by some unaccountable calamity or untoward event in his own life or in the life around him. Should he have waited for this to happen? Could he not have paid heed to the warning finger that is raised in the holy scriptures?

That then is the first and foremost prerequisite. Faith in the wisdom of the men-of-God, who have, by their own radiant example, by their own flaming renunciation of the world of matter and disregard of material pleasures and possessions, silently taught the truth: "The world is transient; rise above it and enter the Eternal Kingdom of God."

Acquisition of Virtues

Having acquired this faith in the men-of-God one should equip oneself with the 'first things': Virtuous qualities. Virtue is poison to the vicious mind! The mind will revolt. Faith is the rod that quells it, devotion is the whip thatsilences it, the sword of aspiration slays it.

The gymnasium, the playground, and other places exist to serve him as fields for the exercise of his body. Similarly, if he has to grow vigorous and healthy in mind, he has to learn from the men of wisdom and learning; he has to think and reflect over what he has learnt. He has to understand and assimilate If he has to grow in virtue, if his heart is to expand, he has to enter the field of service, and engage himself in selfless, egoless, untiring service of humanity. It is in the field of such service that he will come face to face with his own inner nature, and, if he is sincere and introspective, he will know what virtues he lacks and what evils lurk within himself. Without yielding to despondency or depression, he will apply himself to the eradication of vices and cultivation of virtues.

Rooted in faith and devotion, as he grows in virtue, the vision of truth will also grow more and more distinct in him. He will perceive that the body is but the outermost covering, something like the dress he wears, that the mind itself is a thin veil which hides the light within, but, derives its own lustre from it, and that beyond the body and mind, as the substratum of everything, the Self or Reality dwells in his heart. He will realise that with it everything could assume an importance or value; without it nothing is of any value.

Moral Sense

But, first things first. This realisation is possible only if the seeker is firmly established in self-control, in divine virtues. The moral sense must be ingrained in him. We can achieve this best by instilling the moral sense in the young. That is the best period to sow the seeds of ethical idealism, moral sense and righteousness. The young men and women in our schools and colleges must learn the fundamentals of morality and ethics. These have been beautifully summed up in the saying: "To help and serve others is virtue; to harm others is sin." This idea mustbe inscribed on the tablet of the heart of every one of our students. Then and then alone can we hope that out of our colleges will emerge good and noble citizens of whom we, the nation and the whole world, will be proud.

Among such citizens will be found the noble patriot, the great social worker, the man of wisdom, the mystic and the man of God. For, once the foundation of a moral life is well and truly laid, then the inner spiritual aspiration will guide every seeker aright upon the path of Yoga, to the great goal of Self-realisation. Let us attend to the first things and first.

PROCESS OF REALISATION

Experience teaches that no one, indeed, is really happy, or enjoys an unmixed state of peace and happiness, that out of possession comes no satisfaction but from renunciation, out of sense-gratification comes no satiation but from healthy self-denial, out of materialistic pursuit comes no peace but from an inner purity of heart, out of intellectual wrangling and emotional void comes no happiness but from true devotion to God. One finds in life that, in spite of worldly success, material comforts and intellectual brilliance, in spite of everything, there is an immeasurable emptiness, an utter loneliness of spirit-at least for all those whose minds have not become atrophied,-which nothing in this world can fill.

God

Then the mind of man turns to God, and one starts to think of Him in many ways. But even in this thinking of God and of one's relationship to Him, if one has a crude conception of His part in the chaos of life and world, if one tries to justify the happenings around oneself as per one's pet fancies about an arbitrary divine decree and God's favouritism to obsequious devotees and addiction to panegyrics, if one has still to overcome his gross desires and morbid cravings, ambitions and attachments, if one is yet a slave of the senses and tries to satiate them through beseeching divine meditation or favour, then even God cannot give peace or happiness to man.

The concept of God has been very much mixed up with local traditions, racial and historical backgrounds, from time immemorial, and one finds Him portrayed, at times, as one subject to likes and dislikes, as an arbiter in earthly disputes, favouring those who owed allegiance to Him and opposing those who did not, as someone who is a champion of what is good according to human valuation, and so on. Religion associates God with goodness so that one may try to evolve by being good and doing good. But God is beyond good and evil, for if we make Him responsible for all that is good, who could answer for the evil? Good and evil, virtue and vice, are relativeterms, and the position of God has necessarily to be above them.

Man

For the inequalities and Inequities in life, the thinker makes man responsible for his fate, his past actions being the determining factor for his present state, thereby giving him the impetus and the lure for a better state of existence through the means of goodness or good actions, which contribute as well to social harmony and communal welfare, while providing man a very necessary restraining law so that he may desist from any wrong, that he may not disturb the peace of his life and of his future life, or be a harmful element to society.

The doctrine of action and reaction and rebirth also gives man the hope of fulfilling in the next-life all that could not be fully achieved in this, offering him more chances to better and redeem himself, and thus excluding the possibility of a forthright damnation to hell or a quick promotion to heaven. But the very important factor in this is the position of God, making Him impartial and unrelated to the chaotic conditions of the world, for which man is made responsible.

Realisation

Therefore, it is said, to try to be emphatic about what God is, is to deny Him, to describe Him is to negativate Him. He has to be felt, realised, beyond the realm of the mind, the intellect, the senses. However, since life on earth happens to be a relative entity, and human mind a limited agency, the process of realisation has necessarily to begin in the sphere of relativity. An imperfect means of perception, such as the mind, cannot have the fulfilment of the realisation of the infinite, which is formless, nameless, qualityless, and beyond anything that is conceivable. The infinite, in the ultimate analysis, has to be so, for, otherwise, it will be impossible to preserve the position of God in its pristine absence of anything that is open to question.

Hence, to realise God, the mind has to associate itself with all that is positive and noble as being divine, since, in human nature, the positive qualities have an elevating force, and the negative propensities a degrading tendency. By being in a perpetual state of movement in the sphere of the cultivation andassimilation of the positive qualities in life, one transcends all that is negative, that which degrades one from the state of being spiritual. Only then could the mind and the soul of man transcend the world of relativity, and finally be merged in the realisation of the cosmic spirit.

Therefore, in order to achieve such a purpose, it is very aptly said that God is Truth, God is Love. The spiritual quest of man begins with this process of realisation of the positive values of existence and their fructification in one's practical life. As already said, the stepping-stones are renunciation, self-denial, purity and devotion to God, who is Truth, who is Love.

The ideal of renunciation is like a burning flame which consumes the moths of worldly desires, cravings and attachments. Real renunciation is not in the habit one wears or in running away from the world, for that is impossible, but it is effected in the mind of the spiritual aspirant, in his attitude towards the world. Renunciation comes from a correct perspective, sense of values, in the judgment of what is permanent, real, to be sought after, and what is transitory, delusive, mean, and, hence, not to be sought after. The difference is that the worldly man is attached to the world of the senses like a slave, but the renunciate is not; the common man or the worldly individual builds his life on the edifice of his vanity, egotism and self-interest which the renunciate does not.

Renunciation of worldliness, not being subject to the strong currents of likes and dislikes, of inordinate attachment to things or values material, of sensuality and vain ambitions, of egotism and self-centredness: that is real renunciation, that is the beginning of spiritual life. The spirit of renunciation is not a negative state of attitude, not something like the peace of the grave, but a condition of extinction of all that is base and corrupt, wicked and vicious, in man. It is a very positive condition of inner fulfilment.

Self-Denial

Similar is the case with self-denial, which is renunciation in practice, and which means discipline of mundane desires, a restraint over the outgoing senses, not providing the fuel of gratification to the flame of sensual cravings, not submitting to thedictates of selfishness. Normally, a human being is selfish to the bone, and the ideal of self-denial is an antidote to the turbidity of self-centredness.

From the fulfilment of sensual desires come a lackadaisical lassitude, an inner emptiness, anxiety, and a state of subsequent restlessness; from self-denial come strength, moral courage, satisfaction in being victorious in the struggle over base propensities. From selfishness come meanness of disposition, dislike and hatred of others, apprehension, constriction of heart, and mental agitation; from selflessness, a supreme fulfilment, a glowing sense of understanding fellowship and helpfulness to others, breadth of vision, purity of heart, and peace of mind. Thus self-denial is a cardinal virtue in the spiritual path.

Purity

No one can ever hope to know God without purity. Any action which smacks of an impure motive, or is impure by itself, is a fundamental obstacle to one's spiritual progress. Purity comes from incessant self-discipline and prayer to God, who is like a kindly Father, all-perfect, merciful, affable, impartial, an embodiment of truth, love and purity, and to whom one could offer one's heart and soul. This is a very positive conception of personal God.

Prayer can fructify only when man's relationship to God is such an one, for it is very difficult to play to something which is like a void, or is capricious, or merely a qualitative entity. Through prayer to the Divine, not for the fulfilment of mundane desires, but for one's spiritual growth and devotion to truth, can purity of heart be attained. Prayer is a process of emptying oneself, the individuality complex. likes and dislikes, notions and

convictions, in fact. reducing oneself to a zero,-for only then could divine grace flow into one's heart, filling it with the pristine purity of God's presence.

Interrelation of Truth and Love

When one becomes an embodiment of purity, the higher knowledge of truth and love dawns. Meanwhile, the spiritual aspirant has to practise the main ideals of his aspiration,-truth, non-injury and purity, self-control, selflessness and balance of mind.

Truth has got to be practised basically in its relative aspect One tries to sidetrack truth by saying that what is true for one could be untrue for another. But it is not so if it is one thing for one and something else for another, it is no truth at all.

Truth does not only include truthfulness of speech, but freedom of the spirit from anything that is untrue; it is freedom from deceit, hypocrisy, a neutral assent to something untrue if that suits one's self-interest; it is moral courage to abide by one's inner conviction; it is strength of character, an ability to refrain from bringing harm to someone in the name of truth. If truth causes injury to another, it is not the fault of truth but the fault of the ego of the so-called truth-speaker.

Truth is love, and love is compassion, mercy, fellowship. Love, purity, non-injury, unselfishness and self-restraint, are synonymous. Where there are impurity and selfishness, there cannot be true love. In the absence of self-control love becomes morbid. Everything else springs from these ideals. Untruth does not help in the long run. Untruth disturbs the peace of mind, since, to preserve an untruth one has to maintain a continuous chain of untruths, thus creating a state of anxiety, apprehension. Injury promotes retaliation, impurity a putrid state of mind, absence of self-control restlessness, and every evil springs from inordinate selfishness. Hence the need for practising these virtues.

Sincerity

Let sincerity be the ringing note of the aspirant's endeavour. There is no room for duplicity in the spiritual path. It is easy to deceive oneself, comparatively less difficult to deceive one's superiors, very difficult to deceive the subordinates, and impossible to deceive God. Therefore, sincerity is the base of every endeavour. The mottoes of a sincere aspirant are: aspire, intensify, sanctify, purify, strengthen, consolidate, detach and attach, which means, aspire to realise God, intensify the spiritual disciplines, sanctify the heart and mind, purify the lower nature, strengthen the will, consolidate the progress attained or the virtues cultivated, detach the mind from worldliness, and attach it to God or spiritual values.

It is not so much the time spent in devotions or in thinkingof God but rather the effect of the spiritual practices in daily lifethat is of main importance. A good life is the best spiritual life. Be good and do good is the noblest principle in life. It is easilysaid but rarely done in a correct way. In doing good and beinggood, one may be obstreperous, one may try to bandy one'sgoodness over others, and thus offset all the good intentionsexpected of it. Being good and doing good should be natural, not artificial, not being just a 'do-gooder,' not imposed upon but pleasantly felt, not flourished about but silently effected. That is the spirit of being good and doing good. It needs no external prop of acclamation or even acknowledgment. Every nature has two sides, good and bad, the desirable and the undesirable. Man is a mixture of these two sets of qualities. The ideal is not to develop an evil-complex, or a weakness complex, or get oppressed with the idea of not being good, or being a victim of failures, but to try to develop the good qualities, strengthen the higher, positive nature, in order to offset or immunise the grip of the lower nature over oneself.

The light is within you. When the mind is calm, the senses withdrawn, the light flickers a part of its spiritual glory. But it is blotted out again and again by the cross-currents of likes and dislikes, vanity and self-seeking. Hence the need of constant discipline. Aspiration should be followed up with practice, prayer should be

followed up with self-effort, Ideals should be translated into practical life. That is the way of quick progress. That is the message of the Sivaratri.

May God's blessings be upon all.

RUMINATIONS OF A YOGI

1. God is beyond mind and senses, beyond intellectual perception and expression. But the mind is a means to God-realisation, and hence God has to be associated with all that is positive, so that one may soar high, from negative life of bondage to spiritual life of freedom

2. God is the inner ruler, the remote voice of one's conscience. God is within as well as without. To find God, you must look within, still the mind through self-restraint, concentration and meditation, and dissolve it in the consciousness of the Divine. The heart must be purified through selfless service and ethical discipline. The senses must be brought under control.

Synonymous Symbols

3. Truth is God. Truth is love, justice, goodness, the inner Voice.

4. Om is the symbol of God, the creative, sustaining and dissolving power behind all phenomena. Om is the root of all sounds, therefore of all words. Om is the centre of cosmic vibration, the cause of creation. Om is the pulsation of the spirit within man, and man is the vehicle of good and evil tendencies, the physical body, the subtle mind and all its components, that conceals the spark of the spirit within.

5. Om is that which is immanent and underlies all names and forms. God is one, but people call Him by different names. Om is one of them. In practical life, Om is truth, love, purity. Om is the source of light and knowledge. Om is goodness, spiritual beauty, divine music, the ringing note of justice. Om is moral sense, the pivot of ethics. In order torealise Om, one must possess the spiritual qualities that are associated with it.

Spiritual Aspiration

6. You must have a spiritual outlook. You must realise that there is something higher than all that you see, higher than material objects, higher than body and mind. There should be discrimination between the permanent and the transitory, between enduring values and momentary interests centred round one'sphysical being, between right aspiration and negative inclination, between truth and untruth, love and hate. You must choose the positive and try to overcome the negative. That is the first step towards God-realisation.

7. Pray to God for strength and enlightenment. It is in God alone that true peace and fulfilment can be found. The world is a training ground for the realisation of the Divine. It is a means not an end by itself. One must not expect too much from it, but do one's duty in the best possible way and offer one's actions to God as His worship.

8. Expect nothing, you shall know no disappointment. A measure of detachment and non-expectation is necessary in everyone.

9. God is always with you. Have you ever cared to think of this? It is through His Grace alone that you live and move. The realisation of this factor will give peace and strength.

10. Repeat the name of the Lord, anyone that is dear to your heart. Meditate on Him, any form that inspires faith and devotion in you. In the early morning hours, attune yourself with the Divine through prayer, Japa and meditation. This will give you immense strength. In course of your normal duties, try to put into practice some basic virtues such as truthfulness, tolerance, compassion, unselfishness and generosity, and exercise a measure of discipline on tendencies which are not conducive to your welfare. This is the beginning of spiritual life.

Maya and Realism

11. The doctrine of Maya can often have an adverse effect, if not properly understood, instead of being a help. The performance of one's duty in the best possible way, with right attitude, interest and dedication, without bothering about return, is itself worship of the Lord. The world does not cease to be real as long as there is the presence of the individual mind. Therefore, one must be vitally interested in its welfare and do as much as one can as per the circumstances one is placed in.

Efficiency in action is Yoga. The doctrine of Maya is meant to act as a brake when one gets too much attached to things worldly, or loses one's sense of proportion by success, or gets unduly depressed by loss or adversity. Spiritual understandingdemands a strong will, steady mind, vigour and optimism. A negative drawing back does not help one either materially or spiritually. Therefore, be positive always in your outlook, and do not try to shy away from responsibility in the name of Maya Life is a fascinating adventure towards betterment, evolution, perfection. Therefore, accept life bravely, with wisdom, courage, and faith in yourself.

12. Steadiness of mind and control of thought are not achieved in a short time. They require prolonged discipline. Do plenty of Japa, and be regular in concentration and meditation. Let your company be good. Let your aspiration be pure.

Purpose of Sadhana

13. Sadhana should not be a chore. It should be pleasant and done with happiness. Repression is not Sadhana. Mechanical performance of religious practices does not serve the purpose of Sadhana, i.e., when devoid of a sincere effort for self-culture.

14. A religious man or a holy man should be courteous, tolerant, broad-minded, broad-hearted, undogmatic, and absolutely straight in thought. speech and conduct. Hatred should find no place in him. Untruth should not cross his lips. Fanaticism should never contaminate his mind. Righteousness should rule his conduct. Otherwise, he is far from being religious or holy, and he does more harm to society than good.

15. Try to attain perfection in one good quality. The practice of other virtues will be easy, then.

16. Different scriptures are meant for different temperaments. Even parts of the same scripture are meant for peopleof varied outlooks.

Suffering and Desirelessness

17. Suffering is a common experience, in some more and in some less. By thinking of suffering it does not cease. It is difficult to be forthright about justness or unjustness of suffering. The Hindus relate it to Karma, for otherwise God would be unjust. Therefore, one should try to be positive in perspective and action, and accept the unavoidable philosophically, with detachment and stoic determination to keep the spirit strong andresolute. If a thing can be remedied, all efforts must be directed to that end. If not, one has to face the fact bravely and with composure. Otherwise, there can only be neurosis.

18. To be desireless is a term primarily indicative of giving up negative desires. It does not preclude positive desires which are necessary for progress towards the state of desirelessness, which is one of positive fulfilment, and, Therefore, not negative.

19. Silence is stilling of all distractions, all outgoing tendencies of the mind, and its inner turmoil. Silence is self-discipline, including that of speech.

20. Health and disease are conditions related only to body and physical mind. Your real nature is Satchidananda. You are the disease-free Atman. Remember this often. You are the sorrowless, painless Atman, above all duality, beyond the pairs of the opposites. One cannot help, no doubt, being aware of one's physical conditions. But the mind has got to be drawn back again and again from the awareness of the body. Auto-

suggestion helps to overcome negative conditions. But do not tire the mind. Relax, and meditate on peace, and feel that you are full of health.

INDISPENSABLE EXHORTATIONS

While sincerity is a fundamental requisite on the spiritual path,its misapplication could be dangerous. Sincerity without rightdiscernment is of little use, and right discernment or discriminative understanding could come only through experience, study, meditation and company of the wise.

After having read a few Vedantic texts or the Tao Te Ching. some aspirants tend to become megalomaniacs, and immediately put up granite walls on the path of progress.

Seeing God in All

Beholding God in all, or feeling His presence everywhere, is a perpetual experience of the realised souls alone (and one could hardly find a single one of them in tens of millions). It can only form a part of one's spiritual endeavour, but when the aspirant becomes puffed up with the notion that he is seeing God in all, he, in fact, experiences his inflated ego.

When there is so much of impurity in the heart, when the mind is so very confused, when selfishness is the ruling whip, it is absurd to talk of beholding God in all. Without scaling the foothills, you cannot climb the Everest.

As the purity of mind increases, and when the senses are withdrawn, one could momentarily be aware of the presence of God within and without, but that is only a transitory experience, the duration of which depends on the extent of Sadhana, but as soon as the mind descends upon the physical plane, as it must, dragged down by the force of its Karmas, one cannot help acting in accordance with their characteristics.

Importance of Discipline

Spiritual disciplines, therefore, are of fundamental importance for every single aspirant. It is ludicrous to talk in terms of the absolute Reality when the savage within jumps up at the slightest provocation. It is equally fantastic to say, "I am neither man, nor woman; immortal soul am I," when one is not even a human being within, but a ferocious animal, ruled by strong likes and dislikes, morbid self-centeredness, hate and infatuation.

Never forget the importance of self-discipline. It does not mean suppression, but taming the brute within. It means humanisation of the animal, and spiritualisation of the human. It means cleansing of impurities, sublimation of the lower urges, not their repression.

Patanjali did not begin his Yogasutras with lessons on Samadhi or superconsciousness. Do not forget that. He did not even talk of concentration and meditation (Dharana and Dhyana) without having laid emphasis on Pratyahara or withdrawal of the senses from external objects. He did not think of Pratyahara without steadiness of posture and regulation of breath (Asana and Pranayama). He did not think of spiritual life without Yama and Niyama. Never forget that.

Primary Steps

Vedanta does not ask you to think in terms of Sivoham or Soham, if you do not possess the "four means" or the Sadhana-Chatushtaya. These "four means" constitute a vast part of Sadhana, after which alone could one regard oneself as a Vedantin.

The path of devotion does not stress on Para Bhakti (a state in which the meditator and the meditated upon are one), unless one has achieved a great deal by purifying the heart through the repetition of the Lord's name, steadying the mind through meditation on His form, and cleansing the impurities through divine worship and service.

Without Yama and Niyama, or the "four means," or prayer, recitation of the Divine Name, meditation, service and cultivation of virtues, it is just nonsense to talk in superlative terms of Self-realisation, or say that you are neither a man nor a woman or that you love the Self in all beings equally.

Never forget the importance of Yama and Niyama. Yama means self-restraint, taming the animal within. Patanjali cites five Yamas or restraints. They are: (1) abstinence from injury in any form; (2) truthfulness; (3) continence; (4) abstinence from depriving others of anything that is theirs; and (5) abstinence from avariciousness (Ahimsa, Satya, Brahmacharya, Asteya, Aparigraha).

Self-restraint is a basic Yoga. You cannot have balance of mind without restraint and sublimation of the lower urges. There is so much of violence in life-in thought, word and deed. Not a single day passes when one does not hurt another in some form or other. A single act of injury destroys a good deal of one's Sadhana

Violence Is Inexcusable

Even in saints violence is inexcusable. You can only call such rare lapses in them as temporary loss of spiritual balance, as Dr. Radhakrishnan says when referring to Jesus Christ's act of whipping the money-lenders. In individual relationship, to take recourse to violence in order to justify a so-called spiritual reason, is inexcusable.

It is a different matter when one has to act in self-defence, or when there is danger to life, or when one has to fight for defending one's country, but to justify violence in the name of spirituality is outrageous.

Truthfulness does not mean speaking the truth in a mechanical way. One may speak the truth and yet follow the path of untruth. Truth-speaking, when it brings harm to another, or hurts the feelings of another, becomes a contradiction of truth by effecting violence. Truthfulness covers integrity, abiding by the ideal of justice, never swerving from the path of honesty. The path of truth is an austere path.

Continence

Continence does not merely mean physical celibacy. It is mainly indicative of the purity of life that is dedicated to God (Brahmacharya). The heart must be pure, free from ill-will and hate. The mind must be free from impure thoughts. The sex-urge should be intelligently disciplined. There should be no repression, but sublimation.

For a Sannyasin, Brahmacharya means a lifelong vow of celibacy; for a householder it means regulation and discipline of his vital urges, and fulfilling them to the extent necessary while not being their slave.

You would yourself know the importance of the different kinds of restraints and their benefic influence on your life, in general, as you progress on the spiritual path.

Spiritual Observances

Yama and Niyama go together. Niyama means observance any kind of observance directed to help spiritual unfoldment. Patanjali cites five observances: (1) internal and external purity; (2) contentment; (3) austerity; (4) study of scriptures; and (5) worship of God or self-surrender (Saucha, Santosha, Tapas, Svadhyaya, Ishvarapranidhana).

The body and mind must be kept clean. If the thoughts are pure, only then could there be mental poise. If the body is dirty, the mind also will be slovenly. Contentment is a result of mature understanding, not a state of resignation. The heart should be peaceful, and the hands active in the service of God, which means service of one's fellow-beings.

Austerity, not only means discipline of the body to heat and cold to a certain extent, but balance of mind in pleasure and pain. Austerity, like Asana and Pranayama, is only a means, and should not be made a fetish.

It is not necessary to detail the importance of widening the horizon of one's knowledge through study, observation, meditation and the company of the wise. Worship of God means any form of worship suited to one's temperament. Cultivation of the qualities associated with God, such as mercy, compassion, forgiveness, justice, tolerance, and so on, is one of the finest forms of worship.

Self-surrender does not mean irresponsibility and inertia, but offering of oneself to the Divine, which indicates a complete process of self-cleansing (you do not offer a soiled flower in worship) and freedom from egotism, vanity and pride.

'Four Means'

The four means, on the path of Jnana Yoga, embody in them many of the principles of Yama and Niyama. Viveka or discriminative understanding is given the first importance; then Vairagya or dispassion for sense-objects. Without these, spiritual life is just a mockery.

The third means is termed Shat-sampat, or sixfold virtues. namely, Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha and Samadhana.

Sama is tranquillity of mind effected through eradication ofcravings, renunciation of mundane desires. It is interrelated with Dama which means control of the senses.

Uparati is satiety, born of discriminative understanding, it means a state of self-withdrawal, in which the mind does not function through the means of external objects.

Titiksha, or austerity-physical and mental-has alreadybeen referred to. The practice of the formula. "Adapt, adjust,accommodate; bear insult, bear injury," is a great Titiksha.

Sraddha means faith, which is like a keel that balances the boat of life, while Viveka corresponds to rudder, and Mumukshutva, or desire for liberation, to propeller. Faith in God, faith in oneself, faith in the Guru, faith in the wise teachings, faith in all that is good and noble, is the sap of life.

Samadhana is the result of the five of the sixfold virtues, which means "self-settledness," a state of perfect balance, an unruffled state of mind, free from likes and dislikes, love and hate, doubt and despair. It is also an independent virtue which must be cultivated by patient practice,, and, however momentarily one might experience it, one should try to attain it during meditation and at other times, too.

Motive-Power

Mumukshutva means intense longing for freedom from the cycle of births and deaths, a burning desire for Self-realisation. It is the motive-power in all Sadhanas, the propelling factor that pushes you along the path. If this is lacking, Sadhana becomes static.

Remember these aids to spiritual progress. Never underestimate them. Do not delude yourself. Let no one call you a symbol of vanity or an egotist, for there could be nothing worse than spiritual vanity or egotism justified in the name of spirituality. Take care of the details, and the major factor will take care of itself. You have to plod on and scale many hills. You cannot climb the Everest in one jump. There is no jumping on the spiritual path.

A GARLAND OF PRECEPTS

Reduce your wants to the bearest minimum.

Adapt yourself to circumstances.

Never be inordinately attached to anything or anybody.

Share what you have with others.

Be ever ready to serve. Lose no opportunity.

Serve with Atma Bhava (feeling that you are serving but your own self).

Speak measured and kind words.

Have a burning thirst for God-realisation.

Renounce all your cravings and desires, and surrender yourself unto God.

Spiritual path is like the razor's edge. A competent Guru isabsolutely necessary.

Have great patience and perseverance.

Never leave the Abhyasa (spiritual practice) even for aday.

God and Guru will guide you. You yourself will have to tread the path.

Life is short. Time of death is uncertain. Apply yourself seriously to Yogic Sadhana.

Maintain daily spiritual diary and record correctly your progress and failures. Stick to resolves.

Do not complain that there is no time for Sadhana (spiritual endeavour).

Reduce sleep and talk. Stick to meditation inBrahmamuhurta (from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m.). Stick to prayer.

Aspire Fervently

Let the thoughts of God and His laws keep away the thoughts of the world.

Forget the feeling that you are so and so, a male or a female, by vigorous Brahmachintana (thinking of the Absolute).

Never postpone a thing for tomorrow, if it is possible for you to do it today.

Do not boast or make a show of your abilities Be simpleand humble.

Be cheerful always. Give up worries.

Be indifferent to things that do not concern you.

Fly away from bad company and vain discussion.

Be alone for a few hours daily. Give up greediness, jealousy and hoarding.

Control your emotions by Viveka (discrimination) and Vairagya (dispassion).

Maintain equilibrium of mind always.

Think twice before you speak and thrice before you act. Give up backbiting, criticizing and faultfinding. Beware of reaction.

Practise Diligently

Find out your own faults and weaknesses. See only goodin others.

Forgive and forget the harm done by others. Do good to others who hate your.

Shun lust, anger, egoism, infatuation and greed.

Expect nothing from others. Have a set of maxims alwayswith you to induce Vairagya (dispassion).

Treat sensual enjoyment as poison. They cannot give youreal satisfaction.

Preserve your vital energy carefully.

Revere woman as Mother Divine. Root out the sex-idea. See God in every face, in everything.

Pray Devotedly

Take to Sankirtan (devotional singing), Satsanga (good company), Japa and prayer, when the mind is overpowered by lower instincts.

Face obstacles coolly and boldly.

Do not mind opposition when you are on the path of Truth Yield not to flattery.

Respect all living creatures, even the unworthy. Servethem. God dwells in all.

Take care of your health. Do not neglect daily round of simple Asanas and Pranayamas.

Be active and humble always.

Cultivate your heart by giving. Be generous, charitable.Give more than the receiver's expectation.

Desires multiply misery. Develop contentment. Control the senses one by one.

Meditate Regularly

Cultivate the Brahmakara-vritti (thought of the Absolute) by regular meditation.

Have a check over your thoughts. Keep them pure and sublime.

Do not lose temper when anybody insults, taunts or rebukes you. It is a mere sound of words.

Rest your mind in God and live for the practice of Truth.

Be up and doing in the path of divine life.

Have definite aims in your life and persevere diligently.

Observe silence daily for two hours.

Be moderate in everything. Extremes are always dangerous.

Every day have self-analysis and introspection. Know the extent of your growth.

Conserve your energy and concentrate on your spiritual ideals. Think little of mundane objects, and think more of God. You must realise God in this very birth itself.

Om Tat Sat

Brahmarpanamastu